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PAUL BOURGET

AN ESSAY IN LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

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FRANCE HERSELF AGAIN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LA PENSÉE CATHOLIQUE DANS L'ANGLETERRE CONTEMPORAINE.
(Paris, Lecoffre. *Out of print.*)

FIGURES DE MOINES.
(Couronné par l'Académie Française. Paris, Perrin.)

LES SŒURS BRONTË.
(Paris, Bloud.)

PAUL BOURGET: AN ESSAY IN LITERARY BIOGRAPHY.
(London, Constable.)

FRANCE HERSELF AGAIN

BY

ERNEST DIMNET

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PREFACE

THIS volume has been written in English for the English-speaking public, and with constant attention to the English point of view. So many books nowadays consist of articles reprinted under a title destined to give them some sort of unity, that I may be forgiven for pointing out that this is not the case with the present work.[1] Whatever its faults may be, it has been conceived as a whole and aims at offering to the reader a body of doctrine which will help him to understand the rapid evolution of France in the past ten years, and to discriminate between what is real progress, and what ought to be regarded as an accidental relapse. This could not be done without an analysis seeking the causes of both the progress and the shortcomings in an historic development of considerable duration. There may be an appearance of austerity in such a method, but it is

[1] Four chapters were printed, it is true, in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, one in the *Fortnightly Review*, and one in the *British Review*; but they were intended as part of the volume I was writing. I am glad of this opportunity to thank the London editors who in the past ten years have frequently welcomed my contributions, more particularly my highly valued friend Mr. William Wray Skilbeck.

the only one that is repaid by clear understanding, and I feel confident that the section of the public for which I have written will not blame me for adopting it.

As may well be suspected, the greatest part of this book was written before the war began, and I was uncertain at first whether I ought not to defer its publication till the peace was signed. But I found on reading the proofs that I did not feel inclined to make a single alteration of any importance. In fact the reader will soon find out for himself that the volume could not have been written without the danger of war which awakened France in 1905, that the possibility of a war is present in every page, and in fact that this possibility and the effects it has had on French public opinion is what gives the book its innermost unity. The last pages, which were written while my ears were still full of the booming of cannon, are not by any means an epilogue, but a conclusion in the truest sense of the word.

A war regarded philosophically is only important in its beginning and in its end, in the way in which it is accepted by a country and in its consequences. The interval is the noblest repetition—and Heaven knows how we live in spirit with those who day after day prolong that heroic monotony—but it is only a repetition. One of the questions which this volume attempts to

answer, viz. What are the effects of a revived warlike spirit likely to be on the French nation? has been answered by the facts in the first weeks of the war; but the other great problem: What is the relation between the new France and her Government? or in other terms: Will the leaders of France be as worthy of her after the war as the magnetism of the army has made them during the hostilities? will remain, when the peace is signed, exactly what it is said to be in the third part of this work. It will, no doubt, be nearer a favourable solution than it was when the Radicals wanted a reduction of the military service, but it will be what it was.

The present volume therefore is offered to the public as an explanation of the warlike France with which it is in such deep sympathy, but above all as an explanation of modern France as it has been since the beginning of the twentieth century, and as it is likely to appear in the coming decades. I have written it under difficulties, but with the pleasure attending the expression of what patient thought convinces us to be the truth, and with such encouragement from my publishers, especially Mr. Percy Spalding, as I can never forget.

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Consequences in the near future: two possibilities considered—Whatever the issue of the war may be, absolute necessity of a remodelling of the Constitution of 1875 to secure for France governments worthy of her new spirit—England ought to realise this necessity, and the present volume has been written largely for this purpose.

Probability of a new era opening for France.

FRANCE HERSELF AGAIN

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

THE OBJECT OF THIS BOOK

THE object of this book is to investigate the transformation of the public spirit which has been visible in France since the beginning of the twentieth century. That there has been such a change it is impossible to deny or doubt, for everybody has felt it or heard of it, and every well-informed person who has a chance eagerly inquires concerning it.

It is true that there are changes everywhere in Europe, and that disquietude and optimism rapidly succeed each other in almost every nation. Modern peoples are, like modern towns, in a condition of perpetual mutation. Instead of the deep stillness which seemed to hold the cities of old spellbound, there prevails an everlasting activity which alarms when it bodes destruction, and excites when it means reconstruction. What a change in the atmosphere of England since the last decade of the past century, when the author of this book thought he was almost

physically conscious of its tranquillity. Germany, which at a distance gives the impression of a huge body full of youthful and wonderfully directed life, is not free from multiform anxieties. The visitor who comes there under the impression that he will meet with nothing except prosperity and the peaceful enjoyment of opportunities is promptly undeceived. Even Italy, optimistic as her temperament makes her, and elated as she has often appeared lately, has to fight against uneasiness of mind as well as against tangible obstacles.

It is true also that if it is difficult to satisfy oneself about the condition of one little town, nay, one family, the perplexity is infinitely increased when a nation is the object of inquiry. Day after day the observer is placed in the presence of facts which do not tally with his previous inferences, or hears people whose impressions are at variance with his own, or unexpectedly sees the whole political outlook wear an appearance which disconcerts his anticipations. Sometimes he feels inclined to question the possibility of generalising from his scanty observations about a portion of the globe of which his mental as well as his bodily vision can only embrace a depressingly narrow horizon; and he goes back to the popular notion with which every one of us has started, that where millions are

unknown and even invisible, it is useless to speculate as if unity were a fact.

Yet, in spite of the fragmentary character of past history and of the kaleidoscopic nature of history in the making, experience—even the experience of a private citizen with no means of information besides the newspapers and his own curiosity—teaches us that communities have an intellectual and sentimental life like individuals, and that the phases of this life can be ascertained. We find in the long run that a collection of clippings from the press enables us to watch new facts and their consequences without much surprise. We gradually become aware that only one individual in a hundred really matters as a subject of observation; we see that even the masses are in many manners within our grasp: we can tell how quickly—I should say how slowly—literature and philosophy will filter down to them; and we see that several phenomena—war and the fears of war, taxation, the ups and downs in public morals—bear immediately upon them; we find that owing to new conditions, such as territorial unity, centralisation, the diffusion of the press, the diffusion of teaching through the school, and of opinion, thanks to the passage of most citizens through a regiment; owing also to the wider distribution of riches and the influence of politics over finance—which even the rudest

mind can perceive—the political intelligence of what is going on in a country is no longer the privilege of a few educated people, and consequently national reactions are more rapid. All this satisfies us that what is called the life of a nation is not a mere succession of collective moods, but a reciprocal reaction of facts over ideas which proper attention can trace.

I intend in this volume chiefly to describe the amelioration which the moral and intellectual conditions of France have shown with startling rapidity since the Tangier incident in 1905; but, as this improvement cannot be separated from its environment, I shall have to preface this investigation with an account of the previous deterioration of the country; and as the foreign inquirer seems, very rightly, interested above all in its duration, I shall conclude by pointing out how intimately its chances are bound up with some political problems.

It will appear, on the whole, that after being for years—more than fifty years—almost exclusively a ground for experiments, France wants to be a nation once more. She is like a man whom philosophy or science, mere intellectual pursuits, have absorbed until some great sorrow unexpectedly makes him feel that he has a heart as well as a brain, and has to live as well as think, or think in a way that will fit him for

life. We shall see this noble country, distracted and gradually corrupted by false ideals and low morals, suddenly realising that while she stayed idle at home, wasting the precious hours in mere talk, others were scouring the world and gathering power whereby her independence appeared to be threatened. The subject of this book is entirely human: it is nothing else than the story of an error and of the awakening from it, with all the astonishments, hopes, and uncertainties which generally attend such crises.

PART I

THE DETERIORATION OF FRANCE

SECTION I.—UNDER THE SECOND EMPIRE

SECTION II.—UNDER THE THIRD REPUBLIC

SECTION I

THE DETERIORATION OF FRANCE UNDER THE SECOND EMPIRE

1. *It was Unexpected.*

SHORTLY after his accession in 1852, the Emperor Napoleon the Third, addressing an audience at Bordeaux, uttered these remarkable words: "France is happy, Europe may live in peace." Perhaps no speech could be found in the whole history of France to hold so much quiet pride and consciousness of power. This was no brag. The nephew of Napoleon the First had a right to speak of France as a war or peace maker; the man who, himself a Revolutionist once, had just restored order by securing more power than anybody had commanded since Louis XIV, was in a position to appreciate the benefit to Europe of regarding France as something else than a hotbed of dangerous ideas.

France had only one rival in Europe—that was England. Russia was still a far-away semi-Asiatic country; Germany did not exist, it was only a word, or at best, an idea, and Prussia,

exhausted by her military expenses and still ignorant of shipping and industrialism, was a by-word for poverty; Italy, like Germany, was only a hope; as to Austria, she was old and childish, and beset with so many difficulties that she hardly counted. So France and England had the whole field to themselves, and as there were no clouds, the new Emperor only expressed an actual fact when he spoke.

To-day the same sentence would sound like a chauvinist absurdity. Certainly it still belongs to France, as to any other nation, to set Europe ablaze, but she has lost the privilege of imposing peace at her will. The map and statistics of Europe have changed in the last sixty years: Germany and Italy are no longer abstractions, and Austria must blame herself if she has lost her chances. France is stronger than she herself imagines: her geographical position, her wealth, her revived military spirit, her immense diplomatic possibilities if she would only see them, the power dormant in her catholicism, the prestige of her civilisation and culture, are unique assets; but she is only one in the European concert, and she must trust to the future, to the development of the good points in her, and of the weaknesses in her rivals to regain her former position. A great falling off! and one which is made more painful the moment we cease to view the present situa-

tion in its historic perspective to advert to the sickening details of everyday politics.

What has happened? Is it merely that the world has been moving, and that, with the growth of certain great forces such as the attraction of languages and nationalities beginning to work, France has been left behind without any real fault of her own? Asking the question is answering it. Even people who know history superficially have a feeling more comprehensive than mere *data* that France has made havoc with her own chances; and when they are asked more definite questions about the manner in which this self-destruction was brought about, a vague admiration for intellectual daring and a vague dread of its consequences tell them that this country lost through the unwise love of dangerous ideas.

2. *Political Ideas of Napoleon III.*

It is surprising that at least a medallion of Napoleon the Third should not be seen on the pedestal of the numberless statues erected to Cavour in almost every Italian town. Napoleon was quite as devoted to the cause of Italy as the great Piedmontese. He had started life as a *carbonaro,* and the dream of his ripe years was to see the *Italia Una.* This kind and good man, who loved his country, and for several years

could entertain the delusion that he had brought it to a degree of splendour and prosperity unknown even under his uncle, was the predecessor of the shortest-sighted Republican statesmen in his devotion to ideas and complete disregard of their political consequences. It may be to his credit that he gave the world a great example of Idealism, but monarchs are not expected to be Idealists; on the contrary, their subjects look upon them as the representatives of their interests, and pray that they may never lose sight of realities. Napoleon, lost in his vision of a noble nation restored to existence through his efforts, did not see that he was preparing a rival for France if the new nation happened to be more practical than idealistic and grateful. And when, in fact, Italy had become a reality, he was imprudent enough to connect her interests with those of Prussia, and, after helping Italy into the world, he paved the way for the advent of Germany.

His was a strange reign, all brilliance to the superficial observer, full of the seeds of catastrophes in the unseen reality. And it seemed as if Fortune were labouring to hide the snares under incredible pieces of luck and dazzling appearances. The French armies would leave for the Crimea without knowing where they were to land, without even a map of the shores they

were seeking, and on arriving they would discover a beautiful bay which seemed made for their purpose. They started for the struggle against Austria in Northern Italy, a country full of rivers, without bothering about a pontoon-train; but the mistake was obviated on the spot, and victories succeeded victories without any disappointment. The bravery of officers and men was unequalled, and seemed to do duty for everything else. A hundred thousand men were killed in the Crimean campaign, as many in the everlasting skirmishes of the Mexican war, but the country hardly minded: it seemed intoxicated with daring and gallantry, and took sacrifices light-heartedly. It was the same in everything; somewhat gaudy appearances deceived in peace as in war. Three years before the catastrophe of 1870, the Exhibition of 1867, the commercial and industrial prosperity, the visits of sovereigns, the gigantic rebuilding of Paris by Haussmann, impressed the country with the semblance of grandeur, while all the time the future was being undermined by the most unscrupulous of men of genius, Bismarck, and the crisis was already within reach. The Emperor saw the danger. The last years of his reign were darkened by the daily growing Prussian cloud, and his fears alone save him from having been a dupe rather than an idealist; but this is a poor set-off against the

ruin of one's own country. Napoleon will remain responsible for the great changes after which the European map showed an expanded Italy and Germany and a shrunken France.

3. *Spread of Dangerous Notions under the Second Empire.*

Territorial losses and political degradation are as bad for peoples as failure and consequent poverty sometimes are for individuals. All weakening tends to further weakening, and it is unfortunate for a nation to know that its voice has lost influence in the councils where it used to carry great weight. The inclination which defeat leaves behind is towards vain agitation much more than towards revenge. The decadence of nations is seldom accompanied with struggles against conquerors or oppressors, but nearly always with internal dissensions, intrigues, or mere idle philosophising. So the secondary rank to which the imprudence of Napoleon III, combined with the increasing population of several of her rivals, reduced France, was not merely a political falling off. From the ethical point of view, discernible in the history of nations as in that of each of us, this country ran considerable risk of being a loser, even if it had had no other germ of degradation than its diminished power.

But other germs did exist which were to develop with terrible rapidity, and which will at present become the chief object of our study.

It is true that France had not waited till the time of Napoleon III to imbibe those dangerous ideas which poison the life of a community and stay in its veins long after they have ceased to be frequently expressed. The ferment of incredulity which it is not difficult to see in so much of the less-known seventeenth century literature, the theory of indefinite progress of the Encyclopædists, the individualism of Rousseau, had been sufficiently active to result in nothing less than the great Revolution. Michelet, Quinet, Comte, Cousin, and Jouffroy had become famous under the reign of Louis Philippe.

It is even true that, excepting the most attentive observers, people must have been inclined to look upon the Second Empire as a more religious period than any since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Had it not been for the Roman complication in the Italian question which unexpectedly placed the Imperial Government in the position of an enemy of the Papacy, no régime would have had so many rights to the title of champion of the Church. The Emperor himself was not an ardent Catholic, but the Empress was, and the atmosphere of their court was incomparably more religious than that of the court of

Louis XVI; the political order was based on belief, and the clergy were so influential that even now anti-clericalism looks to those days much more than even to the Restoration to find instances of exaggerated Church interference; the *lycées* were more or less overtly given up to unbelievers, but the elementary schools were practically in the hands of the Bishops, and official literature was respectful of dogma; when the sittings of Parliament became public, it appeared that the immense majority of the members were orthodox and a great many of them earnest Catholics, and when Sainte-Beuve, in his last phase, and the Prince Jérome-Napoleon attacked the Church in the Senate the scandal was enormous. To all intents and purposes the authorities during the Second Empire did not separate either perfect civism or perfect morality from the practice of Catholicism; and anti-religious philosophy, literature, or criticism were discouraged and, as far as possible, prevented.

It is highly probable, therefore, not only that the Emperor was in no wise responsible for the deeply anti-Christian intellectual conditions I shall presently describe, but was even hardly aware of them. He survived the war of 1870 by three years, and from his place of exile at Chislehurst he could follow the admirable work of political regeneration which Thiers and the

National Assembly carried on. He saw France diminished through his fault, but he also saw that the country had never seemed more energetic, more sincerely religious, more appreciative of the moral element in its own life than it was during those first few and unfortunately very brief years. No doubt he must have thought that if France had lost something of her territory, her brain and heart were sound, and he must have died hoping that his error would soon be made good owing to the rare mental conditions which his government had done so much to create.

Yet it cannot be questioned that the sceptical, pessimistic, nihilistic generations which we shall see leading France from bad to worse during the first thirty-five years of the Republic, the generations which gladly gave up living to dedicate themselves to idle thinking when they were educated, to low quarrelling when they were not, and completely forgot that their country was something else and something better than the place where they talked, strutted, enjoyed themselves or intrigued, are the offspring of the Second Empire. The spirit which Bourget in his early years felt in himself and deplored in others, properly analysed and traced to its causes will lead everybody—as it has this writer—back to philosophers, poets, novelists, or dramatists who flourished under Napoleon III, and to whose

noxiousness their successors added but little. The chief characteristics of this spirit will be pointed out in the following chapters.

4. *Materialism.*

The theory of materialism which, even to-day, in spite of the success of Bergson, is all the philosophy of so many semi-educated people, from the village schoolmaster to the country doctor, belongs essentially to the Second Empire. It was taught in its crudity at the Paris Medical School, while men of the distinction of Littré and Taine gave it the coherence, elegance, and even austerity of a philosophical doctrine. It was a blending of Spinoza's and Haeckel's monistic mechanism with the sensationalism of Condillac (rather than John Stuart Mill), and Darwin's discovery as a *confirmatur.*

Its success, with the help of some scandal, was almost immediate and very rapid. Taine taught this doctrine with remarkable power because the effort of his whole life had been centred upon it, and he defended it with fascinating eloquence[1] because the unconvincing and possibly hypocritical spiritualism of Cousin roused his irony and indignation. It promptly became the background of the thought—if not of the teach-

[1] Vide *Les Philosophes français.*

ing—of many young professors in the *lycées*, and it was very fortunate when a dash of Kantian moralism gave it the appearance of a faith. Littré and Taine were men whom even their most indignant opponents could only respect—the first *saints laïques* canonised by a few thoughtful disciples; but a system, the legitimate translation of which is, in popular language, There is neither soul, nor free will, nor God, the world is nothing else than matter and motion, is not conducive to sanctity.

It resulted in the Stoic pessimism of Taine himself or Guyau wherever there was elevation enough to make stoicism the alternative for epicurism; but even the refinement of Renan did not save him from a few utterances which today are regarded as vulgarity with the thinnest literary halo; and among people who were neither poor enough nor clean enough to escape from the lowering logicalness of such premises, the consequences were deplorable. In an admirable book which I shall have an occasion to quote more fully, *La France Nouvelle*, published in 1868, Prévost-Paradol said that the last barrier between France and practical, and no longer speculative, materialism was honour, and it was easy to infer from his tone that he regarded it as a poor defence against strong if inferior suggestions.

Naturalism was the literary offspring of

Taine's philosophy. He had said himself that in a chain of innumerable causes and effects there were some links which, properly chosen, studied, and described, were so representative as to enable us to dispense with consideration of the rest, and this method became almost immediately that of the Goncourt brothers and of Zola, whose note-books are strikingly similar to those of Taine. He had also said that analysis of passionate conditions in man was sure to reveal the gorilla hidden under superficial appearances, and in his *Opinions de M. Thomas Graindorge* the idea had been plentifully but decently illustrated. Under coarser pens the description of modern life soon became a record of turpitude and ferocity.

Taine was not a saint; he was only a noble nature with a devotion to work amounting to heroism, and, although his erudition, coupled with his logic, sometimes resembles genius, he is not always intelligent. He never seemed to dislike Naturalism as a literary theory. His essay on Dickens, along with a hundred others, shows it somewhat ludicrously. It is ridiculous to see this wizened old savant taking up the cudgels against the English novelist for a kind of love which, whatever it may be, is confessedly not legitimate love, and for brutality of descriptions. The severe experiences of 1870 and 1871 were necessary to bring Taine to the correction of

some of his ideas, and when he was preparing the two volumes on *Intelligence* he was as remote as possible from letting mere contingencies enter into his consideration. His philosophy was made more outspoken and fearless by another trait which belongs to his contemporaries as well as to himself: the serene indifference to the moral consequences of theories.

5. *Indifference to the Moral Consequences of Theories.*

Taine once expressed in very clear terms his attitude as a thinker: "I have two selves," he said, "one who eats, drinks, goes about his business, does his best not to be harmful, and tries to be useful. This one I leave at my threshold when I come home. Whether or not he has opinions, a moral life, a hat and gloves like those of the public, belongs to the public. My other self, the one whom I let philosophise, knows nothing of the public. He has no idea that practical effects can be deduced from the truth. . . ." "Aren't you a married man?" Reid will ask him.—"Not at all. You mean the other man, the one I left outside the door."—"Aren't you afraid of making Revolutionists of the French?" Royer-Collard asks in his turn.—"What do I care? are there any people called French?"

This means that a man who wants to get at the truth must think of nothing but the truth, and is sure to be hindered in his search if he lets any contingency interfere with the absolute. Taine was so sure of the unimpeachableness of his position that when in 1889, twenty years after the war which had changed his outlook in so many points, Bourget published *Le Disciple*, he was deeply perturbed. Bourget sets forth in his novel the moral responsibility of the writer, and Taine, seeing the immense success of the book, inferred that the views of the rising generation were at complete variance with his own, and that he had had his day. He resigned himself to what he thought was inevitable, but his fundamental belief was not shaken, and he went on with his work in patient perseverance without once asking himself, as Emily Brontë did about such a creation as Heathcliff, whether the philosopher, who is in duty bound to seek the truth without any foreign considerations, has the right to submit to an unprepared crowd all that he looks upon as the truth.

Renan's attitude was somewhat different, but it resulted in the same effects. Taine said everything out of sincerity, and the habit gave his expression an austerity which is more impressive than winsome. Renan was a metaphysician. The discovery of the truth did not appear to

him as something moral, something on which other men have a claim. It was the fortunate encounter of the intelligence with light in the eternal fields. Like most men converted from Christianity by what the apologetics of those days called, in a dangerous formula, divergences between the Bible and Science, Renan had been very much impressed by the extension which his scientific *data* gave to the life of the world. The earth had not received its first inhabitant some six or seven thousand years before our times, and its duration was not to be limited by calculations made from prophecies in Revelations. Popular belief in the *milieus* in which Renan had grown up would have it that as soon as the Gospel had been announced in every country, the end would come. The reigns of a dozen Popes at most separated us from the Day of Doom. When this catastrophe came, neither the thoughts of men, nor the map of the world would be very different from what they were at present : it was absurd to imagine a vast philosophical or especially theological development within such a short period.

Against this idea archæology and philology placed another more in harmony with the immense spaces revealed by astronomy. Man was lost in the infinity of space, but he was lost also in the boundlessness of time. The world was not

recent, it was amazingly old: man had not been on earth for a few but for countless millenniums; his career was not to be cut short in six or seven generations—it was to go on until the sun cooled or the atmosphere became deadly. Many times before the end came would the face of the earth be modified, empires rise and fall, nations be exterminated, civilisations and languages be replaced. What, then, was the use of bringing immaterial details into the consideration of the infinite? What was patriotism, the instinct of one short hour in the life of the globe, to the soaring of the mind after the eternal? Only rude intellects could be satisfied with crawling along the surface of this poor planet: as to Renan, he repeated that nothing mattered but what appeared important as seen from Sirius.

It was inevitable that the lofty philosophy of such notions should appear distinguished to numberless minds unequal to their perfect comprehension, and no less inevitable that their popular translation should be: if God and free will are empty words, patriotism is even more empty.

6. *Humanitarianism.*

What Taine and Renan saw through the cold light of philosophy, others of a more poetic bent had seen before them in the glow of sentiment.

The humanitarian propagandism of Lamennais, Lamartine, Hugo, Michelet and Quinet, and George Sand, which the author of *l'Avenir de la Science* and the author of *l'Intelligence* no doubt despised as mawkish literature, was only a reading of history which the least effort would transpose into metaphysics.

It seems strange at first sight that the Romanticists, who had all of them begun life as Catholics and Royalists, should have become Democrats and Humanitarians. And it is strange also that the transformation should have been brought about by a patriotic feeling; yet so it was. The Restoration had been welcomed enthusiastically by Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Lamennais, and Hugo because it was full of promises; but when the promises were seen to remain promises, and when the reigns of Louis XVIII, Charles X, and Louis-Philippe succeeded one another without bringing anything more than peace—several times bought at the cost of national dignity—the great memories of the First Empire and the Revolutionary Wars appeared in glory, while the kings descended from the high throne which imagination and the doctrine of Divine Right had erected for them. Meanwhile Socialism found exponents of intellectual power and moral dignity never equalled since, and the notion of the people, the poor

blinded giant whom both his misery and his virtues made sacred, became as popular as it had been in revolutionary days. Michelet was his historian, Hugo his bard, and Lamennais became more and more his prophet, while the brilliant Lamartine managed to be his orator and statesman.

For years this love of the humble and ignorant was coloured with the atmosphere of the Gospel. Jesus was the Friend of all the suffering, and references to His words were frequent in poem and address. It was, according to the spirit of Christianity as well as in that of the Revolution, that as all men were brothers, all nations should be regarded as sisters. There ought to be no fratricidal contests between them, no jealousy about worldly possessions. One day certainly would come when, through the agency of the first among them that had proclaimed the Rights of Man and universal Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, they would be united in perfect goodwill and oneness of object.

The Revolution of 1848 was the triumph of this Christian Humanitarianism. It seemed as if Socialism had only to begin rebuilding. The clergy were all democrats and republicans: everywhere the trees of liberty, the emblem of the new order, were planted by the parish priests outside their churches, and Louis Blanc preached

through numberless interpreters in practically every pulpit. This great dream of liberty allied to the Gospel had only the duration of a dream. A terrified bourgeois reaction soon set in; Louis Bonaparte was its agent, and, as he was openly the champion of the Church, the clergy followed him. In less than three years, the Socialists and Humanitarians found themselves deserted and alone, often exiled from France, and the alliance between them and the Church was at an end. Lamennais had only to go on vaticinating as he had done for years; but Michelet, who had loved the simple religion of the mediæval man, turned against it, and devoted the rest of his life to praise of the Revolution and worship of Nature; while Victor Hugo gave vent in *Dieu, le Pape, l'Ane, la Fin de Satan* to the turgid anti-clericalism which made him appear and be named the Pope of Democracy. So, through no positive fault of its own, Humanitarianism lost its Christian appearance and one great element of order and wholesomeness.

There remained another: its undoubted patriotism. Michelet and Hugo were convinced to the last, as Joseph de Maistre had been before them, though for different reasons, that France had a providential mission which she alone could fulfil in the world. But such an idea can only be popular as long as appearances support it.

Let any disaster belie it, and the notion which in poets can survive and even acquire a new strength, will strike the humble in their broken spirit as a ridiculous farce. This is what happened in France. When in 1870 power and *éclat* seemed to pass over to Germany, the bright vision of France as an apostle of liberty to the world, and of Paris as the Jerusalem of the Revolution, vanished. The Democrats found themselves mostly anti-Christians and Internationalists, and of the creed of Humanitarianism only vague formulæ subsisted, upon which unscrupulous politicians shamelessly lived until the advent of Syndicalism. The fraternity of peoples is synonymous with horror of war, and in times when the ideal is feeble and material cravings are strong, horror of war and death can easily become the cowardice which, dressed up by its superior representatives into some sort of philosophy, is precisely what the Syndicalist Georges Sorel calls the "philosophy of the belly." Humanitarianism was, of course, far from this under the Second Empire; but it only waited for occasions to be transformed from a dream into the unmanly timorousness which we shall have to point out as a character of the Third Republic.

7. *Intellectual Hegemony of Germany.*

A long time before Germany actually existed on the map as an empire, she existed as a civilisation, and for that civilisation nobody had more respect than the enlightened French under the Second Empire. Half a century earlier Madame de Staël had initiated, with her book *De l'Allemagne*, not only a great literary movement, but an affectionate feeling which had constantly taken strength as it went. Germany was seen in a poetic light as the home of legend, of song, and of serene wisdom. Prussia, of course, was military, but since Frederic the Great it was regarded as a warrior in the service of philosophy, and, being a secondary power, one which played no part in congresses, it frightened nobody. So the notion of its guns and pressgangs and everlasting drilling did not interfere with the idea one formed of Germany as an ancient and peaceful land with something maternal in its name. Michelet, who hated England because of her treatment of Napoleon, thought and spoke fondly of Germany on any occasion; Quinet, who, however, protested as early as 1852 against what he called Teutomania, was a disciple of Herder, and mirrored the German point of view in many passages of his books; Taine and Renan were

disciples of Hegel, and the latter owed all his Biblical foundation to the Tübingen School; a great many Protestants, French and Swiss, studied in Germany; and Strasbourg, with its Faculty of Theology and its celebrated *Revue*, was a sort of neutral spot where German thought was dressed in the French language.

So Germany caused no alarm as a neighbour, and was an object of great reverence as the country in the whole world where ideas reigned the most exclusively, and where philosophy and criticism enjoyed the greatest liberty. The idea of dangers arising from too much freedom of speculation did not occur to anybody. Germany, with her thousands of thinkers, produced patriots; she did not produce one Revolutionist. The intellectual light she radiated could not but combine in a most happy manner with the passion for liberty inborn in the French.

It seems almost incredible nowadays that this partiality for Germany was shared by many people with whom mere scientific considerations counted little. French society, the brilliant "world" of 1860, doted on the German and especially the Prussian aristocracy. The latter were constant visitors to Paris and Biarritz, while the French year after year met them at Baden; the Regent of Prussia, who was to become the first German Emperor, was welcomed at Com-

pièğne as a Wagner hero, and no diplomat was more popular than Bismarck at a time when diplomats were universal favourites. Prussian politics were not watched, as no foreign politics were the object of much attention in those days, and sympathy with the diplomats did not go beyond admiration for their manners and their linguistic abilities; but everybody wished Prussia well, hoped she would supplant Austria in the German confederacy, felt as the Emperor that the very irregularity of her geographical outlines was a pity, and probably was inclined, with M. de Persigny, to advise the Prussian statesmen to keep their army in constant readiness. About, who, however, was a wide-awake person, printed in 1860 the statement that he longed to see a Germany of thirty-two million people near our eastern frontier, and nobody thought him foolish.

Meanwhile Bismarck was playing his game with an intelligence which would be frightening if the lack of intelligence of most of his dupes were not ridiculous, the unity of the German lands was prepared by military agreements between the German sovereigns, the Prussian army was in as good a condition as any Persigny might desire, and the war which was to push France out of the first rank was only a question of opportunity.

When the war did come, when that same

Prussia which had been supposed to be the representative of warlike elegance and of metaphysical genius suddenly appeared to its bewildered admirers as the incarnation of brute force, the most extraordinary delusion of which a nation ever was the victim was dispelled, no doubt, but something remained: the frightened attraction which makes Lady Anne become Gloucester's wife in *Richard III.* The nervous attention to German methods, the long imitation of them years after 1870, the abdication of some well-known professors at the Sorbonne to the ideas and even the hobbies of German scholars, above all, the haunting terror of another war as unexpected as the first, were all bequests of a state of mind created under the Second Empire.

8. *Unwholesomeness of Literature.*

Literature is the vehicle of philosophy. The intellectual tendencies we have noticed so far show a growing attention to ideas in themselves and a growing contempt for their moral consequences, the consideration of which is looked upon as a prejudice. We shall now see the same indifference to the ethical point of view in the literature of the Second Empire. None could be further away from the really national and essentially patriotic expression which literature

appears fundamentally to be. Writers of poetry or fiction are inclined to be cold and rigid: their attitude towards beauty is very much the same as that of Taine towards truth: there is no charity, no brotherly feeling in it. The anxiety to elevate one's contemporaries, so visible in the great classics of all countries, is absent here. So long as the craving of the artist for perfect expression is satisfied, he is content.

The Parnassian school, when Sainte-Beuve founded it without thinking of giving it a name, was a reaction against the Romanticist bombast. The young poet wanted to be simple, intimate, and penetrating, while the others aimed at continuous sublimity—that was all. His successors were very different. Philosophy had taken a step when they began to write. The optimistic hope of better things which both the exaltation and the melancholy of the Romanticists revealed had made way for the utter darkness of Evolution. Science, which promised all sorts of wonderful improvements here below, could not conceal that it had no promise whatever for the life to come: in fact, there was no life to come, and the wisest course was to submit to the prospect. So Leconte de Lisle and his numerous imitators were pessimistic and often unutterably sad. What was their sole comfort, the one solace of their sunless lives? The pleasure they took in beauti-

ful forms: at first the chiselled finish of the *Poèmes Barbares*, and gradually the marble-like achievements of de Héredia in *Les Trophées*. There were no dreams, no songs, no happiness of any kind there, but every word in these frigid performances was final. Such a poetry can never be popular, and the Parnassians were not. While the world around them was prosperous, pleasure-loving, and careless, they were gloomy and supercilious; the consequence was that the Second Empire, though it saw the birth of a great deal of verse, knew no poetry; it was left to itself, and the only literature it enjoyed was fiction or dramas made to suit its tastes.

The formula *l'art pour l'art*, which the Goncourt brothers made popular, was an appropriate expression for the attitude of the Parnassians as well as for their own; but it connoted something which the Parnassians had not felt in the same degree as themselves, viz. the sympathy with, and imitation of the ways, speech, and manners of, the painters and sculptors. They had been, like Théophile Gautier, pupils of painters, and they had more reasons than many of their copyists to retain something of their early environment. The idea of the literary man in the two classical ages had had nothing whatever in common with that of the superior artisans who were gradually to be called artists. They never

mingled, never courted one another's approval, and did not suspect that a day would come when their ideals, critical principles, and often their technical cant might become the same. Diderot was probably the first literary man whom circumstances as well as inclination brought into frequent contact with painters, and he bears the mark of his intercourse with them. But he seems to have been alone of his kind at the time. Writers were still, or aimed at being, men of the world with social experience and knowledge, whose only distinction was to use a pen more skilfully than mere society people.

Between such men and the set in which Gautier and the Goncourts played off their familiarity with the world of artists there was a gulf. Devotion to art meant in 1860 something esoteric and difficult, a divine election which gave the happy possessors of the gift a right not only to speak and judge but to live differently from the uninteresting crowd of Philistines outside. The evils of such a conception were numerous and various. It falsified the language of literature by substituting for it another which in nine cases out of ten applies to style or thought only superficially. It created the fallacy that the possession of a slang indicates a keen instinct or definite ideas. It exaggerated the confidence of artists and technicians, and while it unfortunately in-

timidated a few outsiders, it no less unfortunately planted in many others a desire to look like those brilliant Bohemians. A great deal of the insincerity nowadays rampant among literary or would-be literary people owes its origin to childish ambitions born in those days. And this was a lesser evil: the superstition of the superiority of art—that is to say, the superiority of Doing or Appearing over Being—enticed countless people who might have been useful citizens away from the peaceful tenor of their careers and made mere pretenders of them.

Pretence and imitation are the faults of the few people who are born with ambitions but with insufficient gifts, and one may imagine that they did not spread to the bulk of the public. It may be so, and it may be also that pretence and insincerity are more contagious than one is apt to suppose. But the chief characteristic of the literature of the Second Empire was one which did not appeal to the few but to the many, and in a subtle unavowed manner which is the most effective of all. What is, in fact, the essence of that great literary doctrine, Realism, which the talent of Flaubert forced upon all the writers of his day? It has been defined in numberless formulæ, some of which have been made to look as distinguished as the noblest definitions of Idealism. But, in fact, it is a strong resolve on

the part of the artist to treat as an artistic matter all that is part of man and life. People often quote that charming and to-day quaint definition of a romance by some Goethean heroine: "A book with characters one would be glad to resemble." It was at the bottom of most literary conceptions, but the idea was suddenly reversed. A writer could not set about describing *all*, without an impulse to dwell on what had been so far concealed, so that realistic novels were from the first—from the appearance of *Madame Bovary*—the description of sentiments and actions which, so far, had been the very opposite of such as moved to imitation.

The effects of this kind of literature are best understood to-day, less on account of historical investigations into them than from a comparison with the moral atmosphere produced at the present day by a totally different style. I shall have, in the course of this book, to mention a return of some young writers to the high plane of psychology worthy of the name, the description of noble soul struggles. We feel, on opening these books, that underlying the narrative is a conception of life which compels us at once to take sides with the good against the evil. The very rhythm of the sentences informs us that easy-going indulgence is not in keeping with the mood we are expected to enter, and our pleasure

is constantly mixed with something more austere than pleasure, and yet persuasive.

Exactly the reverse must have been the impression produced on the first readers of Flaubert and the Goncourts: realism places you on a low plane. Nobody is expected to be especially attentive to his manners in an inferior society, and when the realistic novel does not introduce us to undesirable company, it at least makes us familiar with that part of ourselves of which we are the least proud. If we take pleasure in it, this pleasure will be a sort of confession, the admission that whatever may be the weaknesses or uglinesses of our nature, we think them quite as capable of being made interesting as our nobler sides. With a Flaubert the idea, of course, can be entirely artistic and consequently defensible; but how many readers have enough of the artist in them to counterbalance a despicable sort of indulgence? Certain it is at any rate that what the Second Empire called its sincerity prepared, if it did not give rise at once, to the cynicism of the Third Republic, and that kind of sincerity was begot of the outspoken realistic novel.

On the whole, the indifference to moral consequences of the philosophers, the heartlessness of the Parnassians, the contempt for the poor inartistic man familiar to the school of the Goncourts, and the indifference to the matter of art

of the Realists, were the same feeling in various guises: they all showed a serene certainty that the intelligence of man can take its pleasure in itself irrespective of any effects upon life. Such resolute intellectualism means a narrowing of the human outlook, though it may appear to be highly philosophical, and it also means the acceptation of a restricted influence. It is not surprising, therefore, that while the French as individuals sacrificed the will to the intellect and activity to contemplation, France as a nation was preparing her own decadence and the rise of her enemies.

9. *Anti-Christianity.*

The literary and philosophical tendencies which I have just reviewed went far to create a contempt for humble, workaday activity, and an exaggerated esteem for life in an ivory tower, as the phrase used to go, but they were negative rather than positively scandalous, and often made their way unsuspected. Meanwhile, the orderly appearance of affairs remained the same; the Government supported religion and morals in all their manifestations, Catholicism was practically a State doctrine, and public education—excepting in the *lycées*, where the spirit invariably killed the letter—was based upon it.

It was the doom of the Second Empire that its appearances constantly belied its realities. While the Emperor showed evident reverence for Catholicism, and the Empress—a Spaniard by birth—was an ardent believer, while the Senate and Chamber and all the public bodies consisted largely of practising Catholics, while the religious processions in Paris and in all the chief towns were solemn functions attended by the army and at which most officials were anxious to be seen, Christianity had terrible enemies whose every effort was directed against it.

The present Radicals, who are generally the sons of the Free Thinkers of those days, will have it that the fight with Catholicism ought to be called anti-clericalism and not anti-Christianity. If the Bishops, they say, had not been as influential in civic affairs as the Prefects, if the parish priests had not controlled the village mayor and the village schoolmaster, they would have been let alone, and there would have been no religious persecution in France.

This is partly true. The paradox which gave too much power to the clergy in a country not passionately religious was certain to result in rebellion. But the anti-clerical pretence was only a help for a deep anti-Christian feeling which would have been active in any case, and was then violent, and by no means scientific. Nothing is

more striking than the survival in one country, or even in one *milieu*, of mental conditions long vanished in another country or in different surroundings. The religious views of the French in the latter part of the nineteenth century ought in no case to be compared with those prevalent in Germany at the same period, and which we shall presently see Renan try to make popular. The speculative freedom which had reigned in the Protestant universities for more than a hundred years, when Renan became acquainted with it, had shocked but few people, and it had gradually subsided into the serenity which let pass unchallenged even the wildest theological hypotheses.

The situation was very different in France. Here there was little question of the higher criticism or of scientific investigations into the origins of religious feeling: Voltairianism might be on the eve of its wane, but it was still supreme, and only its tone had undergone a change. There were still the witty unbelievers who dressed up Lucretius or Celsus in epigrammatic modern French, the numberless journalists or *lycée* professors who took their cue from Paul-Louis Courier, Stendhal, Mérimée, About, or their imitators, but oftener this eighteenth-century levity had been displaced by the violence bequeathed to the new generations by the Revolutionists. Michelet and Quinet were historians, and intelli-

gent, but they were violent; Patrice Larroque, who compiled a laborious Encyclopædia of well-worn objections against Christianity, was violent; so were the writers on the staff of *Le Siècle*, and so were the editors of the many reimpressions of *Le Testament du Curé Meslier*, a breviary of unbelief which Voltaire had pruned of its worst provincialisms but had left full of its gall.

Beside this turbid stream of opposition coming from anywhere and swollen anyhow, the dispassionate discussion of men like Jouffroy or Comte had but little influence. It was far beyond the reach not only of the people but of the bourgeois, and yet, unknown as it remained in its real import, it acted on imaginations and helped the belief that the best intellects were rid of religious dogmas.

It seems strange to us after fifty years that Sainte-Beuve, the smooth writer, the man of universal sympathies, the apparently reverent historian of Port-Royal, should have been a rabid and occasionally a coarse anti-clerical, but so he appeared in several of his political addresses and in his conversation. He was as much two men in this respect as Anatole France, who is a living contradiction. Taine often shows violence in the early portions of his correspondence, when meditation had not blunted the edge of his École Normale spirit. But what is more incredible

than all the rest is that Renan, the very name of whom is synonymous with tolerance and abhorrence of partisanship, was bitter and impatient in his first articles, and appealed to the public of the decade beginning in 1860 in a manner which history alone can make anything but inconceivable to us.

What is the *Vie de Jésus* to our contemporaries? The first book which made it possible for them to be free from the central belief of the Church, without making them narrowly sectarian or irreligious, it was the first appearance in this country of incredulousness without harshness, of science without pugnaciousness. It seemed as if Voltaire, before being reincarnated in Renan, had been converted by Chateaubriand, and had then been vouchsafed more intelligence of Christianity than either Voltaire or Chateaubriand had ever possessed. The *Vie de Jésus* appears as a sort of compromise which put an end both to a naïve sort of faith and to a crude sort of criticism. The book has long ceased to be discussed: it is superannuated in almost every part, and yet people do not conclude, as they would have done fifty years ago, that Renan was an amateur who borrowed from the Germans and disguised his incompetence under a veil of literature. The limits, but also the extent, of Renan's erudition are well known, and a famous ecclesiastical his-

torian, who is a good judge of learning, Monseigneur Duchesne, was not afraid to say that his chief book could not have been written without *Les Origines du Christianisme.* The reproach which is now attached to Renan is not one of inadequateness; it is rather moral. Renan gradually became too much of a dilettante to appear as a likely appreciator of religion. Even his reverent attitude is criticised. It has been said of Chateaubriand that he was the loving grave-digger of Catholicism; Renan leaves the impression of a grave-digger who had been a party to the murder of the man he was burying, and, for all his decency, felt rather guilty.

Completely different was the background in 1863. To the crowd which began to assault the Catholic Church in France, religion had been presented as a dupery, and dogma as an opposition to science. Renan was one of the few brave men who did not fear, in spite of the Government, to say what they had to say about religion, its origins, and what was called its deformations. He was not a philosopher made popular by being also an artist—he was a soldier, and the atmosphere about him was the atmosphere of a fight. What the public saw in the publication of the *Vie de Jésus* was an act of defiance. The historian had just been appointed to a chair at the Collège de France. He spoke in his inaugural

lecture of Jesus as an "incomparable man." These words brought about a storm of protests, and eventually the Professor's dismissal, but they also were regarded as the challenge of Free Thought to the Church and taken up as a password. As a consequence the *Vie de Jésus*, which is only the development of these two words, was misapprehended by thousands of its so-called admirers and applauded as a blasphemy, instead of being, as it is to-day, held unpleasantly cautious and crafty.

Renan must have suffered from being pressed into the service of overheated politicians, and being praised by people who would repeat Jaclard's speech: Be atheists first, and then you can be revolutionists. Two years after the publication of the *Vie de Jésus* narrow anti-Catholicism appeared in the foundation of the Solidaires, who thought it a remarkable bravado to insist on being buried without a priest, and of the *Ligue de l'Enseignement*, the first step towards atheistic teaching in the elementary schools. This was the beginning of the fight against the Church which was to fill most of the history of the Third Republic. In this fight Renan took no further active part, and superficial observers were tempted to look upon him as rather a friend than a foe of religion, but the *Vie de Jésus* gradually began to be read in the spirit of its author, and

this spirit proved to be even more destructive than bare-faced opposition. The brilliant butterflies in Parisian society were only too inclined to adopt a view of religion which turned respect merely into a sort of elegance, and this first initiation into Renanism prepared them for its developments. When the French are uncertain about their religious views they are too often uncertain about all the rest, and Renan in his latter phases taught them nothing but uncertainty. So whether irreligion meant violence and revolution, or scepticism and tolerance, it was calculated to divide and weaken. In fact, division and enervation soon made their appearance, and the catastrophe of 1870 was not enough to bring back union and energy. The Third Republic only developed the germs planted under the Empire.

10. *Decadence of Morals.*

The combination of the appearance of dangerous theories with the disappearance of the most powerful moral brake—that is to say, belief—is sure to result in a moral falling off. This was not evident from the first under the Second Empire, because the authorities remained loyal to principles and there was no display of licentiousness. Compared to what we have seen in the past

twenty years, the so-called immorality of the Empire strikes us as severe restraint. The stage in the days of Labiche, Halévy, and Meilhac was innocent, and would appear tame to-day in the most puritanic countries; society in spite of its wild craving after pleasure, tolerated no indecency: the nude at the Salons was rare and artistic, and, in spite of this, frequently blamed. There were still a great many families in which austere traditions were kept up; the feverish excitement, the endemic dissipation of 1865, left them as untouched as the ideas of the Encyclopædists left untouched the homes of our great-great-grandfathers. In a word, the appearances were universally good.

Unfortunately appearances make a poor defence against deep-rooted realities, especially when the public institutions do not help in counteracting them. Philosophy was weakening, poetry had no elevating virtue in it, fiction was the vindication of lawlessness: it was impossible that morals should remain high very long. But there were other elements of corruption in the economic conditions. It was Guizot who had said: "Make money, enrich yourselves"; but the advice was too vague in the days of Louis-Philippe, and the lower classes still remember this reign as a time of penury. The industrial prosperity of France dates from Napoleon III. Of course the machines

and the facility of imports were responsible for it, —no sovereign can have any more influence on these conditions than on the weather—but Napoleon's turn of mind was favourable to a great commercial development. His humanitarian views made for peace and for peaceful transactions; the very wars to which his philosophy—much more than a military propensity—compelled him, show that his tendency was to seek the greatness of France in something different from mere territorial expansion, in the diffusion of influence through ideas and improved material conditions; the resolute orderliness of his government during its first eight or ten years, along with a love of the humble which appeared in excellent social laws, made industrial unrest almost impossible. All these conditions enabled the French to make the most of their *bas de laine*, just at the moment when a small capital found unique opportunities.

It may be that at the time of Colbert, or in the early days of Huguenot prosperity, the changes brought about by a sudden influx of wealth would have been made less intoxicating, thanks to the prevalent severity of manners; but the Second Empire was a time of childish levity, and the example of unrestrained enjoyment of money came from the very highest ranks of society. The Court thought of nothing except amuse-

ment and display, and the numberless *nouveaux riches* whom finance or industry pushed every day to the forefront had all the naïve vanity of their class. The consequence was an irritating display of luxury on all sides, and a universal emulation in acquiring the means of shining, with the inevitable unscrupulousness arising under such circumstances. Money became the sole object in the ever-increasing forgetfulness of the happiness which can be obtained upon a modicum of money; the country was deserted for the towns, especially Paris, which, in its new and occasionally vulgar development, was a symbol and an appeal; and the scourge invariably attending the development of a nation in the direction of material ease—depopulation—made its appearance.

Yet the Second Empire cannot be described as an epoch of widely-spread corruption. Immorality still revolted, and several famous judicial cases prove it. It was rather a period of bubbling *insouciance*, with a light-hearted acceptance of an inferior moral standard which seemed inevitable for the time being, and which people were as remote from advocating as from renouncing. The cynicism of conscious deterioration—the almost inseparable companion of Malthusianism—was to come later. But all the germs of this degradation had been sown broadcast long before 1870, and hundreds of moralists had pointed out their dissemination.

11. *The End of the Empire.*

The Second Empire has left the memory of a happy, brilliant epoch. If the chances of the Bonaparte dynasty have appeared at various periods, and even at present appear, greater than those of the Orleans family, it is not, as people will often imagine, owing to the afterglow of the first Napoleon, but to the popularity of his nephew. The working classes had never been treated as kindly as they were under the legislation which bore the name of the Prince Imperial and made it beloved, and the unheard-of commercial expansion of those days made their lives incomparably happier than at any other period in the nineteenth century: after more than forty years, they have not forgotten it. As to the *bourgeoisie* and aristocracy, they had numberless opportunities for a life of luxury which speculation or trade made it easy to keep up, and on which the brilliant Court at the Tuileries threw its *éclat*. The survivors of this age speak of it as one of those happy times during which men feel almost physically the enjoyment of living. All the men seemed witty, and all the women seemed beautiful. Literature counted a few great names, the fame of which ennobled all the rest, but its characteristics were not greatness

and elevation, which would have hardly been in keeping with the mood of the readers: abundance, facility, graceful ease, and cleverness with a dash of cynicism, of which people had not had time to grow tired, were what was craved and plentifully supplied. Everything was smooth and easy.

Such an epoch is hardly one during which reflection and wisdom are likely to flourish. The fact is that, especially between 1855 and 1867, the French lived as much on illusions as on pleasure. Everybody seemed bent upon deceiving himself. The Emperor had his own dreams of a Europe that would consist of racially united portions, so happy in their union as not to wish for anything else. The Ministers were apt to catch a reflection from their master's beautiful ideology; when M. de Persigny advised the Prussian Minister of War always to keep his army ready, he only thought he was speaking in the general interest of Europe. Officers deluded themselves about the army, as the Emperor did about the relation of France to her rivals: they were innocent of modern improvements, innocent of dangers, and only thought of bravery. Our soldiers had been successful in the Crimea, successful in Italy, and even—in spite of the final result—in Mexico: why should they not be successful again? Were not Prussian officers to be

seen year after year following the French manœuvres at Châlons? If they did not feel that they had to learn, they would not take the trouble to go to school to others.

So there was no ideal in the France of Napoleon III, but there was a great deal of ideology and a great deal of self-satisfaction. The only movement that had something idealistic about it was the Republican movement. Its promoters were either men who had seen 1848, and never forgotten the divine enthusiasm which possessed the whole French nation until Bonaparte came and crushed it, or younger men who believed in Progress as implicitly as their elders believed in Fraternity. These enthusiasts had faith, but it was the faith which is as likely to mislead as to guide: there was no light in it—only the gleams which look so fascinating when they are reflected from all nascent ideologies. What was needed in the last years of the Empire was a clear eye to see that the danger of France did not come from lack of liberty but from the rapid growth of Prussia; the remedy was not mere warm-heartedness, but will-power, strength, and method. It will always remain as a blemish on the Republican group of 1867 that they opposed the effort made by the declining Empire to improve its army, though three years later they were to clamour more loudly than anybody else: *Guerre à outrance!*

While this blind optimism or as blind longing for something new prevailed among the masses, the highly educated were as far from the enlightening contact of reality: they did not live in clouds—far from it—but they lived in the stars, and the results were the same. The French politician and the French officer would not see that Germany was the enemy, but to Renan and Taine and their numerous followers, Germany was the friend. What did they care about artillery and commissariat? their business was with thoughts, with the interpretation of the past, and the anticipation of the future, and in all this Germany was their teacher, and they proclaimed themselves grateful disciples. It was evident to them from their knowledge of history that only ideas have any chance of survival in the succession of facts. So they thought that speculation was as patriotic as action and immeasurably superior, and as—very different in this from their German models—they believed that patriotism as a mere sentiment is rather in the way of philosophy, they laid the foundations of anti-patriotism, imagining all the time that they were only building a temple to Truth.

This admixture of light-hearted or even daredevil optimism among the unthinking, and of ideology among their leaders, with the touch of dangerous enthusiasm added by the Republi-

cans which is characteristic of the Second Empire, recalls almost invincibly the latter part of the eighteenth century. There was the same levity, the same enjoyment of life and pleasure, the same elegant materialism, in the brilliant butterflies at Versailles, side by side with the reckless speculation of the Encyclopædists and the reforming audacity of Rousseau's followers. There was also the same indifference to matter-of-fact considerations, which, however, were in the long run to appear of more importance than high-flown philosophies. We shall see that, as the ideology of the *Encyclopædia* and the *Contrat Social* persisted long after the Revolution which they brought about, the ideology of Renan survived its exponent's disillusionment, and its effects went on long after competent judges had found it wanting. The spirit of the Third Republic we shall find to have been a strange blending of scepticism about vital verities and ineradicable belief in mere words which is only a development of the spirit of the Second Empire. But this development took place unknown to its very champions, and if we want to form an idea of the atmosphere of France towards 1867, we must think of a warm summer evening at the end of a day of pleasure in some not very refined Parisian quarter or seaside resort, with snatches from the bold conversation of gay philosophers attracted by the

fun and yet despising it. The threats of a storm brewing above the horizon only a very few people perceived.

Yet there were such clear-sighted observers, and their paucity did not make their anxiety lighter to bear. Strange to say, the Emperor, who had been so impervious to signs about which a man in his position ought not to have been mistaken, felt misgivings before his *entourage* had any. He realised that his imprudence could not but be punished by at least a severe trial in which he might yet be victorious, but which might also result in his ruin, that of his dynasty, and eventually that of France itself. The gentleness of his sway during the past years of his reign, the wistfulness with which he would listen to any advice, were signs that his mind was troubled, and that he tried to divide responsibilities too heavy for one man. While his subjects were revelling in carelessness, he was slowly wasted by care and disease, and this partly redeems the folly of his previous policy.

Among the true patriots who had no illusions about the seriousness of the position to which not only political errors but the corruption of thought and morals had reduced France, there was one for whom the writer of this book feels the most sincere admiration, and concerning whom even comparative oblivion seems excep-

tionally unjust. Certainly, if Prévost-Paradol [1] had been fortunate enough to live in a time when his book had been a record of greatness rather than an anticipation of disaster, he would be looked upon as one of the masters of the language and one of the most astonishing readers of the future that ever held a pen. His book, *La France Nouvelle*, to which pride and patriotism alone prevented him from giving another more depressing title, was published in 1868, and in the precision of its conjectures leaves far behind all similar works of historic philosophy. Compared to it, the *Considérations sur la France* of Joseph de Maistre appear rhetorical, fanciful, and often wide of the mark. As a literary work it has a full right to be called a masterpiece. No modern writing recalls so forcibly the earnestness and, at the same time, the perfection of the best ancients. Paradol wrote this book—it is not saying too much—with the blood of his heart, and yet with an intellectual self-control resulting in unfailing lucidity: his pages are those of a Stoic, but there is more than emotion hidden under this apparent coolness—there is a mortal wound, and the quiet

[1] He was a journalist, but of exceptional culture, having been the schoolmate of Taine at the École Normale, and revealing his rare gifts almost from the first. Shortly before the war of 1870, he was appointed French Minister at Washington. Both he and his son committed suicide on hearing of the French disasters. Paradol was only forty years old, and his son was not twenty.

beauty of *La France Nouvelle* is that of a dying speech. An extract from the concluding chapter will show how clearly the French of 1868 might have read in it their portrait and their doom.

12. *Paradol's Conjectures on the Future of France.*

After examining the moral condition of France, and concluding that religion and the sense of duty no longer had any influence on its national life, but honour still subsisted in it as an element, undoubtedly weaker, of energy, Paradol went on to inquire into the political circumstances of the country.

France, he said, is now drawing near the severest trial through which she ever had to pass. The dismembering of Denmark, suffered by her in spite of the protests of England, and her countenancing Prussia against Austria, are facts which it is useless *post eventum* to discuss, but with which it is necessary to count. Another fact which is to be taken for granted, without going into its moral significance, is the effort of Prussia towards the unity of Germany. What, then, is the situation created for France by these facts? Will the progress of Prussia in Germany go on unhampered, or will France attempt to stop it by a military intervention?

Let us examine both alternatives, and, first of

all, the hypothesis of a war between France and Prussia, whatever its outcome may be.

Shall we defeat Prussia? It is a remarkable sign of the times that this question should be asked at all. The problem used to be: Can France resist the whole of Europe in a coalition? to-day, it appears that a contest between France and Prussia would be a dangerous testing of our power. However, we may suppose that victory will remain with us. What should we do with it? Shall we abide by the principle of nationalities which has been the guiding idea of the policy of the Emperor, or shall we imitate Prussia in her treatment of Posen and Schleswig, by annexing Belgium and creating an independent kingdom on the Rhine? Either alternative offers considerable difficulties, for we shall be obliged to make war for nothing or to leave Prussia irritated and resentful.

But victory may not be faithful to us, and we have at present to view the possibility of a defeat. Supposing, then, that Prussia, alone or with the support of Russia, gets the better of us, who does not see that the greatness of France would be a thing of the past? France, of course, would not be swept clean away. The jealousy of all against her being once satisfied, the jealousy of the conquerors against one another, or that of the neutral powers against the conquerors,

would incline them to let us subsist, helpless and disgraced, amidst our ruins. It is even possible that Alsace and Lorraine might not be taken away from us, but what was sure to be hopelessly taken away from us would be the power to oppose such a step the day our rival thought it advisable, and this day could hardly be long put off. Meanwhile the unity of Germany, helped by the prestige of the Prussian victory, would be achieved at once; Austria would become another Turkey; and the Oriental question would promptly be settled without any reference to us.

We now have to examine the other hypothesis, that of Peace—that is to say, the possibility of a non-interference of France in the presence of a continuous aggrandisement of Prussia. It is the less probable of the two. Not because the Prussian Government is likely to declare war or the French Government to wish it; there is little doubt but the chiefs of both States are honestly in favour of peace. But, whatever men may wish, things are such that they must bring on a war: it is impossible that Prussia, in spite of her prudence, should not take fresh steps towards the absorption of Germany, and no less impossible that the French Government should witness such a move without interfering.

This fatal dilemma forces itself upon our

minds even apart from the unexpected incidents which may at any moment render peace precarious. The more one thinks about it, the more evident it appears that neither philosophy, nor humanity, nor the firm resolve of governments can stave off a contest between expanding Prussia and France shut in between her old frontiers. As long as this shock does not take place, everybody feels that uncertainty must subsist, and that the claims of the rising nation to greatness, as well as those of the older power to influence, cannot be settled. In any case, France, if she succeeds, will pay with the blood of her children, if she fails, with her position and possibly her existence, for the mistake she made the day when the dismembering of Denmark began and was suffered to go on.

Yet it is not absolutely impossible that peace may be preserved, but the consequences of inaction will be the same for France as those of a defeat. Whether the unity of Germany is accomplished before France indifferent or before France humiliated, the result will be the irrevocable decay of French greatness. Fifty-one millions of Germans will be united under one flag, whereas France will count only thirty-six millions, and as the military forces of Germany are concentrated, disciplined, and provided with all the resources of modern science, in the new system

of war, consisting in suddenly launching enormous masses of men one against the other, the struggle will inevitably be disproportionate.

Some people go on repeating: why should we picture the future in such dark colours, why should not the new Germany turn out to be a peaceable community, exclusively attentive to commerce, industry, and literature? Why should we not hope that the unification of Germany will be the first step towards a broader fraternity of nations? This question can only be answered by another: Why should we, *for the first time in the history of the world*, see a great power stop in its growth from a mere sense of justice, respect the weak in their decadence, and forego without being compelled to it every desire of domination? this would be a miracle.

You may be right, the same people insist, and it is probable that Germany will become one nation, that Austria will be dissolved, Holland annexed, and that all the great questions pending in the East will be settled without us, but, at all events, *France will not be invaded.* Who has not heard this naïve statement put forward as the last and strongest argument of those who will not take alarm at the new condition of Europe? But it is touching rather than reasonable. It is more than doubtful that we need only renounce every participation in the affairs of Europe to

be let alone within our frontiers, and it is against reason that our eastern provinces will be left us out of mere kindness just when we are no longer in a position to defend them. However, let us take it for granted that, in the time-honoured phrase, *France will not be invaded.* Is it necessary for a country to be invaded to vanish from the political stage, and become dependent upon the pleasure of others? Has Portugal been invaded? Did we feel constrained to invade it a few years ago when we had a difficulty with the Portuguese Government about some trader? A French man-of-war simply put into the mouth of the Tagus, cut off the moorings of the ship we thought unduly detained, and steamed away with her under the very noses of the Portuguese guns. Are we prepared to take the same treatment from the new arbitrators of Europe, and to tolerate a repetition of the same scene in the mouth of the Seine? Let us confess the bitter truth: there is no golden mean for a nation once glorious between keeping up its former prestige or altogether losing it. There is indeed a moment of transition, but how very brief! in fact, there is no point at which such a fall can be suspended. One has either to resist, or roll down to the bottom of degradation. Let us, then, accept the alternative which our past forces upon us: on one hand remain, at the cost of

immense sacrifices, what our history and the intelligent perseverance of our ancestors made us, or, on the other, hoping for the best and supposing that we shall be suffered undiminished to survive our historic existence—stay quiet in our modest possessions, with both mind and heart weakened by our resignation and on a level with our new fortunes, but still harping on our former glories and wearying Europe with the names of Louis XIV and Napoleon, much as the names of Philip the Second and Charles the Fifth, frequently invoked on the other side of the Pyrenees, reach indeed our ears, but leave us indifferent.

Paradol concluded with suggesting the only remedy he thought possible: Cease to look upon Algeria as a mere settlement, colonise it with Frenchmen, not foreigners; therefore take measures to stop depopulation, and in time create on either side of the Mediterranean an empire of eighty or a hundred million Frenchmen which no European influence could hold in check.

Whatever his hope of the adoption of this remedy might be, Paradol certainly saw the real situation with astonishing lucidity: the statement that the French were weakened by a double source of influence—an anti-Christian philosophy on one hand, and, on the other, a growing indifference to the position of France as a European factor—

summed up the deterioration of France as clearly as if the writer had actually read her future history.

13. *The Dénouement.*

Two years after the publication of *La France Nouvelle,* the catastrophe came at last. Thoughtlessness or unwise thinking met its reward. The war of 1870 was not the first great modern war; the Revolutionary period had seen several times before whole nations represented by their youngest or bravest being hurled against one another, but it was the first scientific war, with more regard to science than to the old code of chivalry, and the flashlike rapidity which is a condition of success in modern wars. Bismarck, von Moltke, and von Roon had watched their opportunity with untiring patience, and had not lost a minute in the preparation of their attack. They were helped by the incredible folly of the French diplomacy at first, and of the French military authorities afterwards. The result of genius and perseverance being pitted against levity and imprudence was fully what ought to have been expected: the war of 1870 can only be adequately described by the French word which has almost become its synonym, it was a *débâcle,* with at first the astonishment, then the misgivings and

gradually the distrust, the discouragement, and the panic which are its moral consequences. Meanwhile the most terrible winter was raging, and in Paris famine was added to all the other horrors. Then came the suspense and anxiety of Thiers' pilgrimage to all the monarchs of Europe in quest of sympathy and assistance, and the everlasting *væ victis* which to-day seems the proper answer to people whose imprudence was alone to blame, and a never-to-be-forgotten lesson for the future; then the wrench of the Frankfort treaty, and the parting with Alsace-Lorraine, a torture which those who feel it even at present can alone realise in its exquisiteness, and shortly afterwards the gigantic *fait-divers* of the Commune, with its fires and massacres, and a touch of comic vulgarity over it all which makes it more repellent. Meanwhile the great historic result towards which the genius of Bismarck and the blindness of the Imperial Government had tended became a fact. Germany, after being for centuries the poetic name of the Mother of Nations, suddenly took on a distinct significance. Where there had been a jumble of conflicting interests, religions and manners, with no other bond than the language, appeared a formidable politic reality which was to change the European conditions for a length of time which cannot yet be calculated. Where

there had been pleasant associations attached, appeared, in strong contrast with French culture and English civilisation, a brutal power which the commonest bully disguised as a soldier alone represents adequately. Germany has given herself up to Prussia, and whatever she may have gained by the bargain she has lost in foregoing her old charm and opening for herself a future over which black clouds already hang.

But these losses of Germany can only appear as losses to fine sensibilities or to exceptionally clear-sighted historians, whereas the loss of France was a fact which no self-delusion—only cowardice—could lessen. In 1871, less than thirty years after Louis-Philippe—*bourgeois* King as he was—could say that no cannon was shot in Europe without his permission, less than twenty years after Napoleon had said without any bombast that his subjects being happy Europe might be at peace, France had fallen, in power, influence, population, and moral energy, behind a rival whose greatness her own monarch had helped and practically made.

SECTION II

DETERIORATION OF FRANCE UNDER THE THIRD REPUBLIC

THE object of this section is to show how the moral and political decadence of France which had begun under the Empire—thanks to the audacity of a few thinkers and writers and to the blindness of the public powers—was continued under the Third Republic. But while in the preceding régime the authorities had been to blame only for their incapacity and had uniformly tended towards order, the position was reversed under the Third Republic: the spirit of disorder ceased to be embodied in philosophies and poems: it was represented, expanded, and —with a few transient lulls—made worse by the authorities themselves, which more than once seem to have been actually possessed by a destructive genius.

1. *Is the Deterioration to be put down to the Republican Institutions?*

The coexistence of this accelerated falling off in moral standard and political influence with the republican institutions has induced many

critics, some of them of excellent judgment, to say that here was another instance of the "institutions corrupting citizens," and that the Republic as a régime was responsible for the decadence chronologically coinciding with it. These critics, foremost of whom is M. Maurras, with his school, insist that the Republican régime is synonymous with instability, and often with demagogism—that is to say, the worst form of disorder—and that no good can come out of it. They point out that the democracies of antiquity were only prosperous as long as they were oligarchies—avowedly or in disguise—and were all of them ruined by the germ of unrule they invariably developed. The deplorable state of France under the Third Republic, they urge, is only one more illustration of a law which history has never yet belied.

This academic discussion is not new, of course; the merits and demerits of constitutions will always provide men with an exciting topic, while the other great law, of the inevitable decay of all human foundations, will always provide their philosophy with melancholy food. The monarchical system looks well on de Bonald's pages, and the Republican ideal is captivating in the volumes of de Tocqueville—this is a matter of course. Realities vary with times. For the present state of the world, all that can be said

is that democracy works very tolerably in the New Continent, while monarchies show a decided superiority in the old one. The systems based on authority certainly help the public spirit, but when the public spirit is weak, even monarchies are precarious. This might be repeated *ad nauseam* in a thousand formulæ.

We should be very careful to distinguish between the French Republic in the first four years of its existence and the long troubled period that followed. Under Thiers, and as long as the Assemblée Nationale was not dissolved, things were very different from what they became afterwards, and decidedly more satisfactory. The will of the nation was all strained towards the noblest objects: viz. the liberation of the territory still occupied by the Germans, the improvement of the financial situation in spite of the enormous war indemnity demanded by Bismarck, and, above all, the reformation of the army. Unity of feeling concerning such vital points is, of course, a unique asset in the life of a nation; but there was something else that made for concentration of effort, and consequently success. The constitution under which France has lived and lost since 1875 did not exist—it was not even thought of. The idea universal in the Assemblée, and widely spread in the country, was that the Republic was only a transitory régime—practically a truce

between the Monarchists who were the large majority—and that, as soon as the most urgent needs of France had been seen to, an arrangement would be made between the Legitimists, Orleanists, and Imperialists, and the King would come back.

Thus France lived in expectation of a régime of authority. This is not saying enough; compared with the constitution I shall presently describe, the government of Thiers *was* a régime of authority. The powers of Thiers differed entirely from those of the Presidents who came after him, especially those who were elected after 1898, when the Republic had lost whatever energy it had originally possessed. He was much more a Premier than a President, governed as personally as a President of the United States, and appeared as a responsible authority. Everybody must see at once how different this position was from that of M. Poincaré, and it takes the stupidity or the bad faith of the low politician to gainsay that it was not more favourable to the welfare of the country.

The results, it is well known, were remarkable. In less than three years, the Germans had been paid off, the Exchequer of France appeared decidedly prosperous, and the army had been strengthened. The nation was on the high road to speedy recovery, and her neigh-

bours wondered and admired; Bismarck was doubtful and uneasy in his mind; altogether the moral effects of the disaster, recent though it was, were fast disappearing.

Unfortunately the Assemblée Nationale was divided, and in a short time sacrificed Thiers to its divisions; MacMahon, who succeeded him, did not enjoy the same authority; besides, the Assembly had to adjourn itself; as its members made up their minds to do so before settling the difficulties which were in the way of a Restoration, they were compelled to consolidate the makeshift arrangement which they had thought would be sufficient for a while, and they reluctantly passed the laws, the *ensemble* of which is generally called the Republican Constitution. These laws were made by a jealous Assembly, on its guard against the President, inevitably inclined to limit his power lest he should use it against the Restoration, and, on the contrary, anxious to confer as much authority as possible on the Parliament which was to come after it. On the whole, these Monarchists framed a constitution which is not only democratic but demagogic in its principles.

This was a dangerous mistake. The majority in the Assemblée Nationale took it for granted that its opinions, if not their representatives, would be the same in the Chamber of Deputies

which was to be elected. It never occurred to them that things might turn out differently, and that the *couches nouvelles*, the new strata, the existence of which Gambetta proclaimed in a famous address, might give rise to a Parliament as new in its spirit as these were in their formation. They did not suspect that these *homines novi* might have grown up in the hot-beds of Taine's and Renan's philosophies, and be full of undigested notions even worse than those of the eighteenth century; that, consequently, to give them a chance of securing power was to run a risk of delivering France up to ideology, and sooner or later to demagogism.

Yet this was what happened. The Chamber which the first general election (in 1876) returned was not the successor but the resolute enemy of the Assemblée Nationale. Instead of the Duc de Broglie, its great leader was Gambetta, and the effects of such a change were not long in being felt. While the five years which came after the war had seen a continuous reviving of the national energy, the years that immediately followed the election of the first Republican Chamber saw a turn for the worse about which clear-sighted observers had no uncertainty.

We can therefore leave the years 1871–1875 out of our investigation into the deterioration of France, and date its second period from 1876.

This was not the worst either. In 1898 the rise of the Socialists inaugurated an era of unheard-of recklessness, which might be going on at the present moment, if the national danger in 1905 had not sobered most Frenchmen capable of reflection or at least of patriotism.

1876–1898

2. *Imperfections and Dangers of the so-called Constitution of* 1875.

Drawn up as I have just said they were, the constitutional laws were calculated to weaken the legitimate authorities and to seat power where it has no business to be. This perversion was seen very early by all men versed in constitutional legislation, but it took time to bring it home to differently trained intellects. To-day, forty years' experience have left no doubt even in the crudest minds that the Constitution of 1875 is largely responsible for the state of disorder in which France has lived since its slow and unwilling preparation and by no means enthusiastic promulgation. Where authority is not, disorder is sure to appear, and the constitutional laws are sneakingly antagonistic to every authority.

The President of the Republic, of course, has no power: he is only the official representative of the country, but the word *official* is one which,

in France at least, has gradually taken on a meaning excluding real authority. In the United States of America, a President is directly elected by the nation, and enjoys the full delegation of the nation's power during the four years of his office. He knows it well, and if anything strikes even the casual observer, it is the sense that an American President has of his responsibility, and the dignity this feeling lends to his actions and decisions. In France the President is elected by the Chamber and Senate meeting in Congress, and this alone carries considerable significance. The country realises that the relation between the President and itself is not immediate, that it has nothing to say to it, and consequently that it may as well take no interest in it. This, in fact, is what happens. The Presidential election to which France seemed the most attentive was undoubtedly that of M. Poincaré in 1913, and yet a fortnight before it took place the name of M. Poincaré had hardly been mentioned in connection with it. The two preceding elections had been met by an indifference that might be construed as almost insulting; that of Félix Faure was a surprise: only a handful of politicians had supposed it was possible. So the election of a President is what the French call a purely political—that is to say, almost the reverse of a national—affair.

On the contrary, the relation between the President and the Parliament electing him is very close. The President invariably belongs to either the Senate or Chamber, so is intimately acquainted, and often mixed up with, lobby intrigues. Having been a member of the Assemblies for years, it is inevitable that he should share their point of view, habits, and *ethos* generally. The result is that he feels himself their—not the country's—delegate, and not by any means their head. It is remarkable that, although the Constitution empowers him to communicate with both Houses through messages, he never uses the privilege: his situation compels him to act in a semi-private manner, and in a crisis it is never he, but the Prime Minister, who is the centre of attention.

The President can declare war, but it is after consulting Parliament: he signs the treaties, but they have to be countersigned by the Foreign Minister, who is their real author: he can dissolve the Chamber, but it is not without the permission of the Senate: he chooses the Ministers, it is true, and this apparently is an element of efficiency, but his choice in reality is not free—it was well seen in June 1914, when M. Ribot fell: the Ministers are chosen in the Chamber or Senate, and the atmosphere of the Chamber and Senate at the time of the fall of a Cabinet makes

it clear to everybody what the new Government must be.

An *a posteriori* argument shows more conclusively than anything else that the authority of the President does not count beside that of the Chamber: only twice, in more than forty years, were Presidents openly in conflict with Parliament: those presidents were Thiers and MacMahon—the only two whom their past as well as their character inclined to defend their privileges or policy. Both were promptly defeated by their powerful enemy, and compelled not only to give in but to resign as well.

If the Ministers were appointed for seven years, like the President, they would appear much more important persons than the latter. They have a will, and, to a certain extent, the means of carrying it out. They introduce bills; they even sign decrees which, in the absence of a law, have the same compulsory power. When Parliament happens to trust them for any length of time, or to wink at what they do, they may leave a certain trace behind them. Men like M. Hanotaux and M. Delcassé, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, like M. Millerand and unfortunately General André before him at the War Office, belong a great deal more to history than M. Sadi Carnot, M. Loubet, or, above all, M. Fallières. But these are exceptions. One could

hardly count a dozen such among the four hundred and odd Ministers who held office since 1875. The French Cabinets are dependent upon and under the constant supervision of the Chamber, and, when the danger of the nation makes responsibilities less desirable, it is only for a short time that Parliament leaves the burden it refuses to carry to the men who have a right to take it on themselves. The consequence is that Cabinets are short-lived; that the effects of their policy seldom appearing clearly before they have given up office, or even before they have been turned out by Parliament, they can never be made to account for their actions; that the line followed by a Government is seldom adopted by the Government which comes after it, and that, as M. Clemenceau once said, with his usual bluntness in the Chamber, the French Republic is governed incoherently. Add that the rule has almost invariably been that the more difficult parts, those of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, War, Finance, and the Navy, are hardly ever entrusted to technicians, and that, in the words of M. Faguet, the lack of proper capacity is generally associated with the dread of responsibilities. Illustrations could be numberless. The history of the ministry of Navy alone would appear as a long tale of expensive and dangerous inconsistency.

Neither the President nor the Cabinet having authority, it appears evident that the real power in France rests with the Parliament. And let not the reader be deceived by preconceived ideas suggested by American or English associations: it is not the Speaker of the Chamber who is invested with any special authority. He is more active than the President of the Republic and far more respected than the Prime Minister, no doubt, and being appointed for a year he enjoys a sort of stability, but his power does not exceed the limits of the Parliamentary regulations: beyond the application of these disciplinarian rules he can do nothing. So the real possessor of authority is the Chamber itself—much more than the Senate, whose essential duty is only to ratify or modify the Bills sent up from the other House.

Under the Second Empire, when, after years of obscurity, the Chamber of Deputies emerged once more into the light, one arrangement was kept up which limited the initiative of the Chamber in a very wise manner. The Bills submitted to the debates were not introduced by individual members; they were proposed and prepared outside the Assembly by the Council of State, a body of eighty men with exceptional legal or political training, who even now enjoy a consideration similar to that of the Supreme

Court in Washington. The quiet work of these experts saved a great deal of wavering and idle speechifying in the Chamber. This excellent system was ignored in the constitutional laws, and not only any ephemeral Minister, but any ignorant or even anarchical deputy, can introduce a Bill, describe it with lengthy complacence, and compel the Chamber to give it attention. The number of these private attempts at legislating is so great that the four years of the existence of a Chamber are never enough to attend to them, and to the usual discussion of the Budget as well. Many a Bill is looked into, placed on the order of the day, and sometimes debated for months, which eventually cannot be definitely passed or thrown out because a new Chamber is returned before the deputies have had time to make up their minds about it. This accounts for no fewer than eight Income Tax Bills having been not merely laid on the table but amended and perfected by months and even years of sometimes excellent work, without any one of them ever taking any effect till 1914.

So the Chamber legislates at will about the most difficult questions: nothing has been more frequent in its history than seeing this Assembly —mostly consisting of lawyers—amending a knotty Bill on some naval technicality, defended by a Minister of Navy who was not a naval man,

but another lawyer or a physician. Here again incapacity is the rule, and also once more irresponsibility, for a Chamber consisting of six hundred members is at first sight eminently anonymous, but it is so even more than it seems: the anonymous deputy, who gives his vote about a question of which he knew nothing before debates often more confusing than enlightening, is not his own master: other anonymous people, somewhere in his far-away constituency, have also their opinion on the Bill at issue—an opinion largely founded on what they conceive to be the effect of that Bill on their own private interests —and they vote quite as effectually as their effaced representative.

The Chamber which possesses all the legislating power has long arrogated to itself, and still is inclined to secure for itself whenever there is a chance of doing so without incurring immediate responsibilities, the executive power as well. This, of course, belongs nominally to the President and his Ministers; but the President never was known to do more than countersign the laws, and as to the Ministers, they have under them, it is true, the officials who are responsible for the daily matter of fact details of the enactment of a law, but, thanks to the right of interpellation, they are amenable to any question which the most obscure member is pleased to ask

them. They all know it, and act accordingly. M. Combes, who was remarkable for a frankness not to be mistaken for courage, avowedly professed himself the agent of the Chamber. The Cabinet, during the three years he held office, was purely a name, the heads of the Parliamentary groups meeting regularly the Prime Minister and informing him in advance of the pleasure of their adherents, did duty for the ministers: it was the only period during which the constitutional laws were applied not in the hypocrisy of their letter but in the sincerity of their spirit. Then the Chamber was absolutely the supreme ruler that the members of the Assemblée Nationale wanted it to be.

The results of a preposterous combination placing the power where there is no responsibility will appear in the following chapters: we shall see that the intestine divisions of the politicians, their forgetfulness of 1870, their seeking a diversion in a colonial policy, and acceptance of a sometimes humiliating system of alliances in consequence, their own moral deterioration and narrow-minded persecutions of Catholics they affect to regard as enemies, are the natural product of an absurdity disguised as a constitution. All the questions which puzzled foreigners ask so often about French politics, about their corruption, about the continuation of an action out

of which no good effects ever seem to arise, and the only positive result of which is religious intolerance, are easily solved by the consideration of the uncontrolled power of the Chamber. The French Chamber can only be compared to an absolute monarch, but whereas an absolute monarch may rouse and gradually centre upon himself hatred enough for his overthrow, the Chamber being apparently an image of the country and in reality an unseizable Proteus, the deputies can only be reformed by themselves, that is to say by the slow influx into them of the best public spirit. Now, French assemblies have been known so to feel the influence of the country as to sacrifice themselves, but that was at exceptional epochs of rare enthusiasm, say 1790, and *coups d'états* have been of infinitely more frequent occurrence.

3. *The Chamber an Element of Division, not of Union.*

I said above that until 1875, when the Assemblée Nationale dissolved itself, a patriotic spirit of reparation had kept the members of this assembly united enough for the accomplishment of their chief object, viz. the healing of the wounds of 1870. Things were very different in the first Chamber elected under the constitu-

tional laws. The deputies sent to Versailles in 1871 had been chosen by the country still under the impression of the double tragedy of the war and the Commune: they were decidedly conservative, and were expected to work in a spirit totally different from that of Gambetta and his group. Five years later a great change had taken place. France had recovered from her shock, and instead of the bewilderment of defeat she felt the exhilaration of convalescence. She was tired of the hesitations and divisions of the Assemblée Nationale concerning a Restoration which at present did not appear as a necessity. She was no longer afraid of Gambetta, and began to be as convinced as Bismarck that his name no longer meant: *guerre à outrance.* So in 1876 she returned a Chamber which was in majority Republican. The Monarchists belonging to the preceding assembly saw with amazement that the constitution they had devised as a shield for themselves became at once a weapon for the Republicans. These Republicans were as different from themselves as could be imagined. They no longer had before them an immediate and very noble object to attract their energies: they were much more men possessed of a spirit and feeling its presence powerfully but not distinctly. And what was this spirit? Eminently the humanitarian, philosophical, and anti-Chris-

tian tendency which I pointed out as the spirit of the Second Empire. Most of these men had been young barristers, journalists, or medical students in Paris when Taine, Renan, Baudelaire, Flaubert, &c., were the oracles of cultivated youth, and they now reappeared full of that dangerous culture. Henceforward they, the new leaders, would govern France by the light of ideas which the Second Empire had tolerated as academic but would have abhorred if they had been propounded as a political beacon. And these newcomers might well affect the materialism of Taine, the cosmopolitanism and dilettantism of Renan, but they could not be philosophers or dilettanti like Taine or Renan. Their vocation being politic they were reflections of these distinguished men as professional politicians can be, that is to say, in a coarse manner. Their chief satisfaction was evidently to be able to combat the clergy—their political enemies—in the name of science and philosophy. During the first five years of the existence of the Republican régime they had had serious reasons to fear lest the Republic should only be a monarchy without a monarch, and while the Assemblée Nationale was divided between its patriotic effort and its incurable divisions, they had fought throughout the country for their share of power and their portion of booty.

Such men, excited by years of frustrated expectation, by the recent contest and by the heat of victory, were, in the full force of the term, politicians as opposed to statesmen, that is to say, men who would inevitably confuse the interest of their party and their own selfish ambitions with the interest of their country. In this mood and with this background, finding a constitution which made the Chamber the supreme master, it was impossible that they s ould look beyond the limits of party politics. In fact, from their first success in 1876 till the great shock of the Tangier incident in 1905, the history of France as written by her deputies is merely the history of the Chamber, nay, of the majority in the successive chambers. With no authority to control them the deputies could only follow the guidance of their collective passions or appetites, and they did it.

It is unfortunate that the first Republican manifestations looked very much like persecution, and almost from the first like religious persecution. It was very natural that the Republican party should take precautions against a possible return of their opponents; it was even comprehensible that the recent conquerors should be on their guard against the alliance of the throne and the altar, but Ferry went farther than even Gambetta probably wanted, and made

a whole category of citizens outlaws at once. *Vive la Republique!* meant so clearly: Down with the Monarchists! down with the Moderates! down with the Catholics! that even now, worn out as forty years have made this cry, it has still the hostile sound which it took then. It is a watchword more than a national phrase, and the Radicals of to-day are as ready to claim a right of proprietorship in it as the Opportunists of 1877. Peace, unity, reconciliation they look upon as personal enemies, and they have done so for two generations.

Beside the satisfaction of their hatreds they would also have that of their appetites. Gambetta himself said to his friend Madame Adam that it was only just if after leading his soldiers to battle he should let them have the booty. This meant an everlasting fight for public employments, for well-paid sinecures, for privileges of all sorts, and a stern denial of their due to those outside the party. The history of the Third Republic can envy that of previous régimes no sort of corruption. The numberless changes of government occurring without any very marked change in the Republican personnel show clearly that interests have had more to do with them than principles or opinions. Whenever we read the list of a new Cabinet we hear people unaware of political realities wonder at seeing

all the shades in the Republican majority so well represented in it, but this is not owing to the penetration and prudence of the newly-made Premier, it is the result of very matter-of-fact negotiations between the groups, and the list of names can easily be converted into a column of figures.

Clever as a lot of men seeking their own profit in everything may be, if they happen to be legislators instead of forming some disreputable corporation, they have to legislate. Now legislating is a somewhat dangerous business. As long as you can legislate against your enemies, and are sure of a public that will approve of your energetic action, it is very well. But a Parliament cannot endlessly devise laws against some opinions or some categories of citizens. A time comes when positive action has to be taken, either because the majority has promised it, or because the minority threatens agitation if measures likely to be popular are not adopted, or merely because a whole country cannot admit the fiction —so dear to the French deputies—that a Parliament does enough so long as it governs. Being thus constrained to pass and enact laws, they are in danger of creating discontent among their friends and sometimes—wherever taxation is involved—of being prejudicial to themselves, their family, or their clientele.

This necessity has been the motive of a great deal of vain talk in the Chamber, and of the production of a certain number of laws. Some of these have been mere sham: for instance, all the Income Tax Bills I mentioned in a previous chapter, the frequent suppression on the eve of general elections of the Sub-Prefects, and the no less frequent passing of Bills destined to put heavy taxation on luxuries—and consequently likely to please the majority of electors—but nullified by the surreptitious introduction of numberless clauses of exemption.

Many other laws have been passionately discussed and carefully considered, tried, and afterwards repealed when they were found not to act satisfactorily. But all this wisdom was expended mostly upon measures concerning the Chamber itself. This assembly never shows so much practical good sense, it is never so ready alternately to stand upon principles and then resort to combinations, as when its own existence is at stake. These admirably-balanced laws have concerned mostly the suffrage, and it is wonderful that the country should not have been early aware that the interest which the Chamber evinced in electioneering matters was not interest in the electors but interest in the elected.

Finally, the Chamber has often passed laws which were to give pleasure to the country at

large: for instance, the many military laws, all intended to make the burden of the military service lighter at least to the multitude, and the labour laws, the laws on public assistance, the nationalisation of railways, &c.—these measures were uniformly called truly democratic before being enacted, but the moment their effects were seen they had to be given their true name, which is demagogism, and either had to be repealed or to be obviated by other laws *ad infinitum*.

Such are the drawbacks of an assembly professedly destined to legislate, but through a fundamental error empowered to govern. Nobody will gainsay the statement that since 1876, and even during the existence of the Assemblée Nationale, the deputies have sought primarily their own advantage, and only thought of the country's welfare in connection with it. Of a policy based on the state, progress, and moves of the surrounding countries, and really entitled to the name of a national policy, it is too clear that they have been ignorant. No unguided assembly ever is conscious of that supremely important side of politics unless the existence of the nation be at stake, and the common danger sweep away individual selfishness; even then it is not for a very long period: assemblies without the counterweight of a strong authority

above them are a destined prey for dissensions and for the petty politics inseparable from dissensions.

4. *The Revanche given up.*

The Republic was founded by Gambetta less than two months after the beginning of the war of 1870 in an admirable impulse of patriotic courage. Gambetta's motto was *Guerre à outrance*, and the programme of the new Government was to fight desperately and never let go one stone of our fortresses or one inch of our territory. It will be to the everlasting honour of Gambetta that the battles on the Loire were fought to redeem his word, and that France though defeated was not disgraced. After the conclusion of the peace Gambetta adopted another watchword which sounded as noble: "Unceasingly think of the Revanche, never speak of it." This speech again was dictated by unalloyed patriotism. It was evident that the all-ruling necessity for France was to get back what was her own, restore by so doing her impaired prestige in Europe, and, from the mere sentimental point of view, heal a wound which could not cease to bleed as long as Strasbourg, and above all Metz, were in the hands of the enemy.

Gambetta's courage was so unquestionable,

the sincerity of his resolve was so little open to doubt, that for many months Bismarck had no other thought than to keep him out of office. Gambetta at the head of the French Government in the then state of Europe, he said, would be like a drummer in a sick man's room.

However, the election of 1871 returned a Conservative majority, and Gambetta was almost as isolated in the Assemblée Nationale as he had been in the last Imperial Chamber. Henceforward he had to fight once more for his party, and its progress in the country, to make up for lack of influence in the Assembly. Time passed, and when, in 1876, the general election made the Republican leader practically the arbitrator of French politics, he appeared very different from what he had been supposed to be. "Always think of the Revanche, but never speak of it," was changed into, "Speak of it all the time, whether you think of it or not." In fact, from the moment when his influence in the Chamber became irresistible until his death in 1882 he never ceased to speak of Alsace-Lorraine in eloquent though tumultuous addresses, but he never initiated any action likely to bring about the return of the lost provinces. As to his friends, they did not seem to mind. In a short time Grévy succeeded MacMahon in the Presidency, and was it not Grévy who, only a few

months after the end of the war, had coolly said to the Alsatian patriot Scheurer-Kestner, that repining was useless, and France must give up Alsace-Lorraine without any hope for the future ?

The key to this apparent contradiction is not difficult to find. It is a principle which nobody nowadays seems ready to question, that a Monarchy is better adapted than a Democracy for the execution of far-reaching political plans with a view to territorial expansion. Such plans require unity of purpose, secrecy, and, above all, duration and perseverance. Of all these requirements democracies are destitute. Even if they were less idealistic in their essence, less inclined to talk—sometimes think—about the progress of mankind rather than the progress of the country they occupy, they would still find great difficulty in carrying out positive political designs. The assemblies representing them are too large, too unstable, too frequently in contact with the multitude, and too narrowly dependent upon it. Now the multitude, excepting in rare political circumstances when unity of feeling happens to create unity of purpose, is not only ignorant, but near-sighted; it is incapable of understanding reasoning based upon history, and of taking other than immediate interests into consideration; it is too unintelligent to be discriminatingly selfish. Above all, it is timorous. The one praise which

even the individuals in the lower classes professedly the most attached to the past will generously bestow on the republican regime is: at any rate the Republic has one good point, it does not go to war.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the first truly Republican assembly should have held decidedly pacifist principles, and be satisfied with hearing its most eloquent orator go about repeating that immanent justice could not but reclaim the lost provinces from their captivity. The Monarchists had said everywhere during the canvassing previous to the election of 1876 that the success of the Republicans would mean an immediate danger of war, but it was only a ruse, and everybody knew it.

The Republican party seem also to have realised, almost from the first, the cogency of a very simple though possibly imaginary reasoning. A war, they thought, must result in a triumph or a defeat. If France is victorious, she will fall in love at once with the general to whom she owes her victory; if she is once more conquered, she will take such a dislike to the régime, which she will regard as the cause of her misfortune, that its continuation will be impossible.

This argument is based on wrong premises. The memory of Napoleon the First haunts everlastingly the nervous Republicans who dread the

possibility of having to love another dictator, and prevents them from seeing to what extent conditions are changed. Modern generals have nothing in common with the young hero who came back from Italy with the fascination of youth as well as that of glory about him. They are elderly men and technicians. When the campaign is over they are generally exhausted by it, and not likely to cherish a Cæsar's ambitions. It was Von Moltke who led the Germans to victory in 1870, and yet if they had been inclined to choose another master than the King of Prussia, it would have been Bismarck and not the soldier. Few generals will ever be more popular than Boulanger and Marchand, who however did not really imperil the Republic. But these historical facts have no weight with easily perturbed minds, and the average Republican is endlessly influenced by his double consciousness of the fact that France loves peace, but adores soldiers.

One other cause, and possibly the most important cause, of the gradual abandonment of the Revanche is to be found in the personal psychology of Gambetta. That Gambetta was a patriot cannot be doubted, that his moral quality was not equal to his impulses is also a fact, and that he had the characteristic notion of the Third Republic—viz. govern not only with but for one's party—is another certainty. He unquestionably

was sincere in his passionate grief at the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, and there is no reason to suspect that he was anything but sincere every time he spoke of their recovery in the twelve years that followed 1870. But he was an epicûre with an unconquerable propensity towards idleness and pleasure; he was partly Italian, and had the Italian's complexity of soul and the Italian's gift for relieving his emotions by oratory. Five years' political agitation between 1870 and 1875 did not alter the nature of his sentiments towards Alsace-Lorraine, but it opened up new channels for his activity. His and his friends' success at the general election of 1876 was a political success, and he found himself deep in politics, and the head of a mere party five years after being the undisputed representative of all the best French feeling. Perhaps he was tired of fighting, and wanted to reap the benefit of his victory; perhaps his party was too much for him—he despised its covetousness, and yet condoned and even defended it; add that he was a prey to women, and spent the violence of his temperament in sentimental affairs. It has been contended also that he was duped by Bismarck, who approached him through a disreputable man—Henckel von Donnersmarck—and an even more disreputable woman—La Païva. Certainly he did not reject the temptation as much as he ought

to have done.[1] Perhaps he imagined that there was enough machiavellism in him to make a gull even of Bismarck. Perhaps his conceit was flattered and his energy weakened by the idea that he was negotiating man to man with the greatest diplomatist of the age. Perhaps his old points of view gradually changed, and in his desire of enjoying his own success he became persuaded that Alsace-Lorraine would best be got back by peace, and that a commercial treaty, some exchange he thought possible in the future, would do what a war might fail in bringing about.

Whatever the causes may have been, it is certain that the redemption of the Eastern provinces, which had been the ideal of the Republic at its birth, was gradually dropped by the Republicans, so that it became practically their characteristic act. To revert openly and frequently to the question of Alsace-Lorraine, to give the annexed population renewed assurances that they were not forsaken, and that there were still many patriots on the look-out for an opportunity to redeem them, has been for more than thirty years a sure sign that one is in opposition, behind Déroulède and Barrès, far away from the orthodox Republican schools. On the contrary, the milk-and-water theory that the progress of

[1] This question of the relations of Gambetta with Bismarck I have tried to elucidate in an article in the *Quarterly Review*, October 1911.

idealism through democracies will some day force Germany to leave it to the annexed provinces to choose on which side of the Rhine their government ought to be, comfortably settled in most Republican minds, and was occasionally displayed in public without any protest from the responsible leaders.

In that way the landmark towards which the efforts of France ought to have tended continuously after 1870, the beacon which was to have thrown its light upon the foreign politics of the French Governments and made them attentive to every move of the chief European nations, became obscured, and other infinitely less noble guidances were substituted for it. A policy of what was called Recollection was recommended, and the quieting speech : *point d'affaires* was the shibboleth. The result was that the French imagined that their love of peace was a condition productive of peace, and that, fancying they had nothing to fear from outsiders as long as they disclaimed warlike intentions, they lived among themselves as if they had been alone in the universe and spent their native pugnacity at home.

5. *The Deterioration of France emphasized by her Colonial Policy.*

It is dangerous to speak of the colonial policy of France inaugurated by Ferry in 1881, and still at the present moment absorbing a great deal of her activity. To admire or blame it without careful discrimination is an injustice or a piece of levity.

It is remarkable that the Colonial expansion of France, though advocated by a patriot, was encouraged by Bismarck. The Prussian statesman saw in it a diversion from the thoughts of Revanche, and hoped that the African ambitions of France would alienate Italy from her. But it is also a fact that the Protective legislation prevalent in Europe towards 1880, and the unexpected presence of German and American goods on markets where they had never been seen before, made it imperative for French commerce to seek new openings. The finance of France was rapidly recuperating, the *bas de laine* was full, and, unless one wanted its millions and billions to be absorbed more and more by foreign and even hostile enterprise, it was urgent that channels should be found for them. Had not Prévost-Paradol suggested in a less matter-of-fact spirit that France should settle in Algeria and colonisé it by other than

vicarious methods? Surely he would have approved of plans for an Imperial development, and in themselves such plans were nothing but wise.

It is evidently an injustice therefore to say that the Republicans only went to Tunis, the Tonkin and Madagascar, later on to the Soudan, Congo, and Morocco, to avoid going back to Strasbourg, and to find in those new settlements enough lucrative positions to satisfy the greed of their party. Nothing prevented French diplomacy from going round to Alsace by Indo-China. On the contrary, the French, with the encouragement of success on far-away shores, the revelation of military and administrative capacities in men who had otherwise languished in idleness, would probably have felt bolder as they became stronger, and in due time a chance would have offered for them to wash out of their history the stain which cannot stay there. But all this ought to have been done with the everlasting purpose of re-establishing the European equilibrium altered at Versailles and Frankfort, and such an ambition required conditions which in fact we find have been lacking. It presupposed enough moralising of the country to bring about repopulation instead of increasing the rate of depopulation, and this could only be done by a careful school and religious legislation along with encouraging economic measures. It also pre-

supposed the anticipation of conflicts on far-away shores as well as in Europe, instead of the apathetic certainty that colonising was the surest method to avoid frictions. Nothing could be accomplished without a diplomacy, an army, and, to begin with, a navy of the first rank; and, in order to use these instruments properly, a great deal of the determination, unity, and self-sacrifice which caused the success of the Japanese in 1905 was necessary. Such a combination, the critics of the Republic insist, is impossible in a Democracy, but is almost easy under a Monarch. Have we not seen the German Emperor create in a few years a navy second only to one in the world? Is it not a fact, on the contrary, that the powerful navy of the United States may be rendered useless by a President whose ideology should hamper the more virile impulses of commerce?

Whatever may be the rights and wrongs of Democracy in other countries, it is certain that the Republican Parliaments, unsupported by the public spirit and poorly guided by merely nominal Governments, were unequal to the task set for them. Exclusively attentive to their divisions —to what Jules Ferry contemptuously called their *pot au feu*—they let well-meaning but incompetent Ministers send the French Navy to rack and ruin. So while they accepted a Colonial

policy leading evidently to a Colonial Empire, they suffered the only instrument likely to make a Colonial Empire of any use to be broken in their own hands.

Besides, it was childish to imagine that a policy of recollection and non-interference could be maintained while a Colonial policy was being carried on. The danger of war became immediate the moment the ambitions of France were openly declared; and as France could not run the risk of a war alone against any of her more powerful neighbours, she was compelled to seek or accept alliances. Now, entering upon any system of alliances amounted to giving up the attitude of non-interference adopted since the establishment of the Republic, and being ready to follow a line entirely at variance with the democratic principles.

6. *Imperfections of the System of Alliances.*

Alliances may be the results of international sympathies, but when they are nothing else they are dangerous. Certainly the sympathies of Napoleon the Third for Italy, which were of an eminently sentimental order, were of little use to France. Agreements ought to be concluded with great precautions and watched with even greater attention. The moment they create a

condition of confiding apathy in a nation, they are not only a sign but even an element of decadence. Now it is difficult for democracies to derive from an alliance the advantages which it is in its nature to procure, and for the French Republic, as the constitutional laws of 1875 make it, it is almost impossible. The representative body being the image of the multitude can hardly face the possibility of a war with sufficient determination, and, on the other hand, the Foreign Minister, being under the perpetual supervision of the representatives, cannot act with proper secrecy unless he does so by unconstitutional methods. This is not all: the Foreign Minister is as apt to be displaced and replaced as his less important colleagues, and the danger of a lack of continuity is constant.

All these difficulties were only too plentifully illustrated by the diplomatic history of France until quite recent years. Its two chief moments are characterised by the names of M. Hanotaux and M. Delcassé, who followed different methods, but came to alarmingly similar results.

It is an unfortunate fact connected with the tenure of office by M. Hanotaux, that the official promulgation of the alliance with Russia practically coincided with the most unpleasant pacifist demonstration that France had to witness since the Third Republic. The alliance dates from

June 10, 1895, and just a week later, on June 18, the French fleet was represented at the inauguration of the Kiel canal, largely built with the money paid over by France to Germany after 1870. M. Hanotaux was a disciple and an admirer of Gambetta, and it would seem as if the action of the younger man proved that his predecessor actually wanted a reconciliation with Prussia, although he did not wish for an agreement with Russia. At any rate people generally construed an official step of such solemnity in the light of a recognition of the Frankfort Treaty and a final abandonment of Alsace-Lorraine. This was hard indeed, but nothing is ever really final in political history. What one century does another will undo, and no Frenchman—not even among the Socialists—doubts that some day, in spite of all the pacifist theories or diplomatic blank lies, Alsace-Lorraine will come back to its former possessors. So, one could take refuge against the present reality in hopes for the future, and especially in the hope of promptly seeing the Colonial Empire of France founded and prosperous.

Viewed otherwise than sentimentally, the plan conceived by M. Hanotaux could not be denied greatness. It was a bold and effective design to draw a line of French influence across the whole width of Africa, and the idea served by such a

man as Marchand will be remembered in history as of epic daring. But M. Hanotaux, who had had to keep from French opinion that the Russian alliance involved some sort of veiled *entente* with Germany, had also had to keep from it—and consequently keep from the Chamber—that Marchand's march was not a mere explorer's expedition, but had a military and diplomatic character as well. When the Fashoda incident became known, there was a universal surprise and some nervousness, but the fear of a war only lasted a few days. How could M. Hanotaux defend his point of view when his colleague of the Navy had no vessels to support his arguments? The consequence of the first effort of France to get out of her isolation, therefore, was to show to the world that she could still conceive the designs of a nation of the first rank, but, owing to the subservience of her Governments to opinion, she had only the strength of a nation of the second rank to carry them out.

Exactly similar was the experience of M. Hanotaux' successor, M. Delcassé.

Of course it was a new departure. M. Delcassé had none of the intellectual admiration of M. Hanotaux for the culture of Germany, and his patriotism had its roots deeper in popular ground. He had no notion of the possibility of intimidating or coaxing Germany in the far-away future

into giving back or exchanging Alsace-Lorraine against some settlement overseas. His secret hope was to insulate Germany from the rest of Europe by a chain of apparently peaceful agreements, and when the time came to make her feel that, strong as she thought herself, she could not resist the justice of France's claims supported by a tremendous coalition. Here again, there is the beauty of a patriotic and coherent conception. Perhaps its author forgot that the parties to the agreements he signed were more attentive to their own ambitions than to the prospects he himself cherished, but the very simplicity of such an idea was a force in itself, and its gradual accomplishment created in Europe an atmosphere of respect for France which was another element of success.

It is therefore no unforgivable vice in M. Delcassé's plan that it contradicted flatly that of M. Hanotaux, for the diplomacy of every country offers similar pieces of discontinuity. But the error of M. Delcassé, like that of M. Hanotaux, was to prepare war without preparing for war or without giving due notice to the responsible persons that they had to prepare for war. We shall see by and by that the seven years of M. Delcassé's office (1898–1905) coincided with the Dreyfusist agitation and with the Government of M. Combes and of the Radicals of the narrowest

observation—that is to say, the period in French history during which mere words were treated the most respectfully, and views were sufficient food for the minds of politicians. War appeared as a barbarous impossibility, and the chief preoccupation of the Ministers of War and Marine was to civilise the army and navy, turn ships and barracks into institutions for the civic perfecting of young Frenchmen, and, in short, prepare the world for universal peace. The policy of M. Delcassé was presented all the time as the surest guarantee of peace, and he alone knew that its inevitable issue must be the professedly impossible conflagration. The unbounded surprise which took place in 1905 was the result, and although it will always be regarded as the most fortunate awakening for France, it was accompanied with such a humiliation of the Foreign Minister as all good Frenchmen, whether his friends or his foes, felt with him. His own disappointment was more than bitter. One of his friends concluded that France was doomed, and wrote a book the title of which alone was an avowal of despair.[1] All that ought to have been concluded was that no foreign policy is possible to a country whose constitution vests authority in an Assembly and not in Government, and makes it imperative for the Foreign Minister

[1] *La France qui Meurt*, by A. Ebray, 1910.

either to be a nonentity or to conceal his action from the politicians who some day will be his judges and the arbitrators of his fate.

To conclude, the policy of alliances, as it was carried on during the greatest portion of the existence of the Third Republic, practically until the military revival of the country, was in contradiction with the nature of the French democracy, and yet had all the appearances of being perfectly at one with it. It secretly meant war, but superficially it was—and loudly professed to be—the safeguard of peace. Who could attack France when the millions of the Russian army or the powerful fleets of England were ready for her defence? The real reading of the situation ought, of course, to have been: We are involved in the interests and consequently the vicissitudes of other nations, therefore we must be day and night on the look-out and prepared against every surprise. But this attitude, and politicians know it, would promptly bring about a state of affairs practically nullifying the constitution which makes them supreme. Instinctively and unconsciously a country feeling the vicinity of danger will not leave its security to the pleasure of a divided and irresponsible collectivity—it is sure to seek better watchmen and braver defenders. So the selfishness and levity of Parliament, as well as the impossible position of French Foreign

Ministers, combine to keep the truth from the nation. And what is the result? that the alliances, instead of acting as a tonic, act as an opiate, turning the public feeling and the public mind from all-important realities, weakening their sense of responsibility, and centring the national pride upon that morbid joy of having been great once by power and of being great yet by culture and art, which is a well-known sign of the decadence of nations.

7. *The Deterioration of France exemplified in the Politicians of the Third Republic.*

Compared with their opponents in the Imperial Assemblies, the handful of Republicans—Gambetta, Jules Simon, Jules Favre—were the glorious minority. They had talent and courage, and they represented the future—the beautiful future which the popular mind pictured to itself under such glowing colours. Nobody doubted that an Assembly of such men would be far superior morally to any Parliament elected through official influence under the Second Empire.

During the war the same men stood for heroism—mad heroism it is true, but none the less sublime. The violence of their resolution scared the demoralised country, and the dread it

inspired caused the success of the Monarchists in the election of 1871. When, in 1876, and especially in 1878, they became the majority, and their influence could hardly be challenged, things changed. There were two great ideas to defend: the necessity of the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine and liberty of conscience. Both seemed essentially Republican ideas: religious freedom and the integrity of the territory being dogmas with the democratic theorists. But the moral falling off of Gambetta which I mentioned above was only one case in a thousand, and the politicians who succeeded one another in the Republican Parliaments felt at once that liberty of conscience was a political danger and that the vindication of the patriotic claims on the Eastern provinces would cause a timorousness in the minds of the electors by which they could only be losers. In consequence they gave up these two noble causes to the opposition.

What was left to them to give an appearance of superiority to their side? They have repeated it so often that we ought to know. They plumed themselves everlastingly on giving France three great blessings—viz. civic freedom, international peace, and schools for the poor. But are these essentially Republican conquests? By no means: they exist in Belgium, in Italy, in Scandinavia, even largely in Germany, to say nothing of course

of England. Besides, it must be confessed that civic freedom represented by the suffrage is more the shadow than the thing, that peace at the cost of dignity is a perpetual danger of war, because—as the German proverb says—"him who makes himself a sheep the wolf will eat," and as to schools it is a melancholy fact that after forty years about six in a hundred French soldiers are illiterate, and the schools, instead of being instruments of civilisation, have been turned into weapons of unbelief. From the first, the true Republicans in the French Parliaments have been not the champions of peace, but the panegyrists of ease; and this opened a gulf between what they were supposed to be and what they really were, between their ancestors of 1792—bred on antiquity and rising quickly though tumultuously to the sublime—and themselves, even between the generous utopianism of their predecessors of 1848 and their own coddling wisdom.

Not that the Republican *bourgeois* who sit in the Chamber are cowards. M. de Mun, who has no special reason for flattering them, has admirably narrated[1] a memorable sitting of the Chamber in which one could see what they are capable of at a pinch, when the French spirit in them is roused.

[1] *Le Gaulois*, September 21, 1905.

"It was in February 1887, when M. René Goblet was Premier and Boulanger Minister of War. The Schnœbelé incident had recently taken place, and the language of Bismarck was becoming day after day more irritating. In the meantime the national factories were at work on the Lebel gun. In the afternoon of the 8th the Premier unexpectedly demanded a supplementary fund for the speedy completion of the work. Everybody realised immediately that the situation must be serious; the sitting was suspended, and the deputies, of whatever political opinion, pressed round the Prime Minister. Yes, M. Goblet said, the situation was serious. The deputies were called back into the House. In a moment all the seats were full. The public tribunes were overcrowded, and the diplomats' special tribune was full of ambassadors: the deep silence oppressed everybody and the universal emotion was visible. The Speaker, M. Floquet, stood up, holding in his hands, which slightly trembled, the Bill under consideration. His voice sounded through the room as he read the first chapter. When it was over, the Speaker put the usual question: Has anybody anything to say? but the silence remained unbroken. Then he spoke the other usual sentence: Let those who wish to support the motion raise their hands. Immediately five hundred arms were

thrown up at once, and I can remember Bishop Freppel, who sat next me, making the same gesture with a rapidity recalling the soldier's promptitude and with the fire of Revanche in his eyes. Chapter after chapter was thus passed through, the banal gesture at the end of each one being repeated as a sacred rite. It seemed as if the soul of France had taken possession of these hundreds of men. The people in the tribunes were breathless with emotion, the ambassadors looked on serious and surprised. The moment the last division was over, the House became once more empty in a twinkling."

If a French Assembly even of inferior political quality should ever become incapable of an act of courage like this, France would not be France any more, and I should not be writing this book. But courage of the exalted order is not in daily demand in a Parliament, and the inferiority of the politicians of the Third Republic has had more occasions than their fortitude to attract attention. This inferiority is caused, partly, as I have said above, by the excessive dependence of the representative upon his constituents and the consequent habit of seeing their interests and considering their wishes before the interests and wishes of the country; also by the lack of political guidance for which the Constitution is responsible. But even with a better mode of

election and a better Constitution, the politicians of the Third Republic would have suffered from an original fault which nothing can compensate —that is, the notion that politics is a trade like any other, with its risks, its difficulties, its expenses, and consequently the blemishes attached to all modern professions. The politician is of very much the same kind as the financier with whom he is in daily intercourse: his moral standard is limited by professional necessities.

In his constituency the deputy who labels himself truly Republican and denies the ticket to men outside his party is seldom esteemed. He need not, like a member of the English Parliament, see his constituents very frequently—in fact he is often satisfied, when he has the Prefect on his side, with visiting them every four years, just before the election, or possibly at some celebration—but he is in frequent relation with half a dozen men from each parish who are not by any means the pick of the population. When people outside this charmed circle happen to speak of it, it is seldom without a wink or a shrug. In short, the deputy is not respected, and when the Prefect comes round for the *conseil de révision* of the recruits, or some important magistrate is sent down by the *Cour d'Appel*, the effect produced by their presence is very different. The deputies of the Second Empire,

"creatures of the power" as they were, made an incomparably better impression. Certainly they were delighted to be on good terms with the Emperor's Government, and it was somewhat to be regretted that the "white poster"—the sign of official recommendation—made their election almost compulsory, but they were gentlemen [1] who did not care for the material advantages which might accrue to them from being at the Palais-Bourbon, and if they made interest in Paris for some local improvement it was not out of base motives. No French Assembly, since the clamorous Sans-culottes, has been in its general appearance so near vulgarity as the Chambers of Deputies elected after 1875. The demagogism of 1848 was elegant in comparison: its utopianism was pure, and the presence of Lamartine, Louis Blanc, and even Armand Marrast lent it gentlemanliness. One understands the feeling of Mrs. Craven—she was born la Ferronnays—who, when she occasionally came back to her native country after 1878, used to say that France in her new state appeared to her as a lady of noble rank who had married her footman.

It is useless to recall in great detail facts proving that the professional politician is not scrupulous: the scandal connected with the

[1] Half the members of the Chamber and nearly two-thirds in the Senate were titled men, and there were very few professional politicians.

name of Wilson—the son-in-law of President Grévy—the Panama affair, the financial operations known as the Tirard and Rouvier conversions, are classic instances which are enough to warrant every suspicion when one hears of minor or less public offences; I shall have an occasion to say later that the crafty manner—rather than the fact itself—in which the deputies voted for themselves a handsome old-age pension—a most mysterious transaction—and raised their salary by two-thirds, greatly diminished even the poor consideration they had enjoyed so far.

If the Third Republic has produced but few men of great civic virtue, it has not produced many who were remarkable either for their eloquence or their political capacities. A comparison of the Republican orators since Gambetta, with those of the Restoration and of the reign of Louis-Philippe, would be crushingly in favour of the latter: it is a sign of the times that Jaurès should have acquired the reputation he enjoys, mostly, it is true, among those who never heard him. There was a great deal more of the cymbal than of the clarion in him.

Statesmanship is even more scarce than eloquence. In these days, when international politics are so important that they should be a constant subject of meditation for true patriots,

we do find a few deputies who can hold forth plausibly enough about these intricate questions —there are even those who have built for themselves a sort of system, and stick to it without too much inconsistency; but where is the voice which at intervals ought to remind the French of their national duty with enough knowledge of the situation of Europe and enough authority to silence mere babblers and make the country feel united in one great patriotic impulse? where is the French Cavour?—certainly neither M. de Freycinet, nor M. Hanotaux, nor even M. Delcassé can hope to have statues erected to their memory.

A general tinge of banality has been attached to all that the Republic has produced until quite recent years. The roll of its Premiers, when one reads it over from the first days, sounds like a list of incarnations of mediocrity. Even the Presidents are painful to remember. Certainly the first, Thiers, was a great Frenchman, and the last, M. Poincaré, once gave hopes of being one; but all the rest, excepting MacMahon, who had a brilliant past and was the soul of honesty, were ordinary men, chosen for their very lack of individuality. Placed beside the American Presidents, they cut a sorry figure, and yet the United States does not devote its best men to politics. It is melancholy to reflect that if the

celebrities of the army, or of the bar, or of literature, and even of journalism were compared with those of the successive Republican Parliaments, the comparison would be more than disadvantageous for politicians.

This is, as often happens, both the result and the continuing cause of an absurd paradox. It would seem that the Chamber, being the chief and practically the only governing influence in France, the best men in the country ought to convene there. But it being preposterous nonsense that a legislating Assembly should have power to the exclusion of the real Government, the best men either will not seek this Assembly, or are eliminated from it, or become deteriorated in it. At all events the history of France in the last forty years has been that of the deterioration of deputies as much as that of deterioration by deputies, and the lack of any real merit in the rulers of the country has been a powerful element of demoralisation.

8. *Anti-Clericalism the only continuous Policy.*

The first great battle that the Republic fought was against MacMahon and the Monarchists, and it was promptly won: after the election of 1878 there was little question in the country of any strong anti-constitutional oppo-

sition: the Monarchists were as divided as ever, and when the death of the Comte de Chambord perforce united them, there was still the division between the Orleanists and Imperialists. The second battle was against what was called Clericalism—that is to say, the interference of the clergy in the politics of the country. The clergy, it is true, had been Republican in 1848, and the difficulties which the Emperor had had with the Pope owing to the Italian question had not contributed to make the bishops and their priests Imperialists. So the tendency of the clergy would have been towards a Republic if the word had had the same meaning that it had when Lamartine used it. But with different people the word had taken another signification, and the old alliance of the Throne and the Altar was revived.

It was natural therefore that the Republicans, whether unbelievers or the reverse, should look askance at any possibility of the clergy inspiring the politics of their flocks, and there were reasons for fearing lest they should, for the clergy, though not Imperialists, had been favoured by the Empire, and their political influence had in many places been considerable. The famous speech of Gambetta, "Clericalism is the true enemy," ought therefore to be replaced in its environment, and only a political meaning put upon it. Gambetta

was no believer, but he was no antagonist to Christianity either, and it is ignorance of history alone that will quote his oft-repeated words in the same breath as Voltaire's no less famous: *écrasons l'infâme.* His true meaning appeared clearly in another watchword: "Anti-clericalism is good at home, but it would not do to export it." Gambetta fully realised that French influence overseas was indistinguishable from Catholic propagandism, and would have been more than satisfied if he had seen the clergy keep away from politics as they did under Leo XIII.

Were the men in Gambetta's immediate *entourage* in the same state of mind? Unfortunately not. Ranc, Brisson, Clemenceau, Paul Bert, even Ferry, even a highly-cultivated man like Challemel-Lacour, were opposed to clerical influence, not merely for political but for philosophical reasons as well. They were full of the spirit of the Empire, but they had all of them been educated by men who had preserved the Voltairian tradition of 1840, and their admiration for Renan was, as I said above, admiration for the personal enemy of Christ, and not at all for the elegant dilettante we now take him to have been. So the effort made to keep the political influence of the Church within bounds soon became transformed into antagonism against the Church herself. Less than two years after the undoubted

triumph of the Republican party, the Jesuits had been turned out of their schools and made outlaws. It cannot be questioned either that the law permitting divorce was passed, less from social or sentimental considerations, as in America, for instance, than because its promulgation would be construed by the popular mind as a startling defeat of the Church. At the same time an agitation was begun against the influence of the Pope in a country not his own, through a clergy only national in appearance, and the arguments which were to bring about the separation of Church and State began to be circulated by the Radical press.

Yet this was only a beginning. It soon appeared that a great anti-clerical influence, which about 1880 acquired a power it had never possessed before, wanted more decisive steps. It has taken years to convince people who fear to be victims to exaggeration, especially in England, that the influence of the French Freemasons had any effect upon the politics of their country, and that it was of a decidedly anti-Christian nature. To-day one meets with less incredulity. Official documents have proved to evidence that Freemasons are and have throughout the history of the Third Republic been numerous in the Chamber and Senate, that they invariably vote solid, and that if any of them

presume to dissent from the rest they are excommunicated, as M. Millerand was in 1904; it is also evident from matter-of-fact comparisons of the resolutions passed in the yearly Masonic Conventions with contemporary Parliamentary proceedings that the legislation of France has often been prepared in the Lodges. The essentially anti-religious character of the Masonic influence appears no less clearly from the perusal of Masonic official publications, and above all of the most recent Masonic Ritual. Until 1876 the name of the Grand Architect appeared in the French edition of that book as it did in the versions printed in other languages. After that date this name disappeared from the Ritual, and the fact was so obviously meant as an open declaration of atheism that the English and Scottish Lodges shortly after gave injunctions to their members to keep away from the French Lodges when they came to the Continent.

In this spirit, then, and with this exceptional Power, has Masonic influence been exercised in France until scandalous revelations concerned with the espionage of officers by Freemasons made it less effective, or at all events less brazen.

The chief effort of the Freemasons and their friends was turned at first against the teaching of religion in schools. Napoleon the First and Napoleon the Third had entrusted a great many

State-supported schools to the Christian Brothers and to various orders of women. These schools were not uniformly effective: as a rule, the Christian Brothers were excellent teachers, the nuns less so. Yet the improvement among them was constant, and when a law was passed making the usual degree as imperative for them as for the other teachers, there was no reason why they should be inferior to anybody else. But the objection against them was not based on lack of professional efficiency, but on the spirit which their costume seemed to represent. A Bill was passed in 1880 secularising, as it was called, all the Government schools, and determining what the teaching of religion in them ought to be. Ferry, the principal initiator of this measure, was not an atheist: in fact his religious views did not differ very much from those of Jules Simon and the other disciples of Cousin. The mention of God, the soul, and morals was not forbidden in the schools, the children were to be taught their ethical duties, but all this was carefully regulated. The teaching of the master, though in ninety-nine cases in a hundred destined exclusively for Catholic children, must exclude all that could give offence to other denominations, or even to mere Theists opposed to any revealed creed. This was called the Neutrality of the school.

It was evident that in a country overwhelmingly Catholic in numbers this legislation would inevitably bear the appearance of what it was indeed secretly meant to be, and that it would promptly become in its spirit a legal warfare against Catholic beliefs. Everything depended upon the school teacher, and it promptly turned out that the school teacher who kept farthest away from the interpretation of the Church in his presentment of Theism was regarded by his superiors as nearest the ideal of neutrality, and rewarded accordingly.

But the passage of Catholicism to Theism in Frenchmen not exceptionally well educated, and in the years immediately following the success of Taine as a demolisher of Cousin and of the very Theism recommended by Ferry, could not result very frequently in the creation of a state of mind similar to Rousseau's or of a sincere—if extremely sober—Swiss piety. Such an attitude is almost impossible in Latin countries in which rationalistic belief only exists as the refinement of a highly educated *élite*, nor would it have been greatly favoured by the enemies of the Grand Architect; so in many places, mere Theism soon became the religion of Science, with the identification of God with the category of Ideal, Progress, and Evolution, and above all, the most perfunctory manner of teaching the official

chapter dedicated to Spiritualism. A few facts have shown how Ferry's Theism was understood both by the teaching body and by politicians. The time-honoured example in Lhomond's Latin Grammar *Deus est Sanctus* was dismissed from improved editions as dangerous for neutrality. One school edition of *La Fontaine* replaced "petit poisson deviendra grand si Dieu lui prête vie" by "si l'on lui prête vie." M. Fouillée, the well-known philosopher, had the very unphilosophic weakness to alter a passage in his wife's popular *Tour de France par Deux Enfants*, so as to leave out a visit of the two young travellers to Notre Dame de Paris. Finally M. Combes, at the time of his greatest popularity as an anti-Catholic Premier, was hooted down by his majority for saying that he was a Spiritualist, and had to come a few days later and make amends for his imprudence by explaining his statement in a manner which explained it away.

This historical scene belongs, it is true, to the Dreyfusist period of the Third Republic, to which I shall only advert by and by, but it throws its light on the preceding years, and leaves no doubt that when the Republican majority passed the Ferry Bill in 1880, it regarded it only as a first step towards more radical suppressions.

The campaign against religious teaching is only one phase of the endless war waged against

the Church by the Third Republic; and if I wished to give even in outline a more complete sketch of its history, I should have to review the Parliamentary history of France almost month by month—any random reference to the *Journal Officiel* will prove this—but the effort of the Republicans in the first bloom of their success to dechristianise France through the schools shows not only the spirit of their leaders, but also their policy. This has consisted, and still consists at the present day, in proposing the philosophical campaign against religion in all its forms—even the vaguest—as a continuation of the great contest of the years 1871–1878 against the Monarchist clergy.

Such a policy has had a double advantage. It has often blinded uncritical people to the really anti-Christian character of measures presented as the legitimate resistance of the lay against the religious society—the measures against the religious orders have had universally this character—and when, at various epochs, the Republican unity has seemed to be threatened, it has helped to bring together the disjoined parts of the majority. The "black spectre" pointed out now by Combes, now by Bourgeois, had often frightened deputies or electors into their duty, which is to support the Government. This attitude is sometimes sincere—and then it

is rather stupid—sometimes put on, and then it borders on hypocrisy, but even in the most resolutely Protestant countries the terror of Rome could not be more powerful in its immediate effects. The confusion of anti-clericalism with anti-Catholicism or anti-Christianity has been so easy to produce, and is so ineradicable, that even now, after forty-four years, after the effort made by Leo XIII to win the Catholics to Republican loyalty, after the success of such a truly Republican movement as the *Sillon*, the word Republican in the mouths of Radicals means nothing else than a man more or less opposed to the Church. "The whole religious question lies between us as a gulf," said a Prime Minister to M. Cochin. Who was this Prime Minister? M. Poincaré himself, moderate though he be. And when did he say this? In 1912, seven years after the fall of Combes and the apparent cessation of the most abject compression of religious liberty. There are reasons to suspect that this statement was only a political stratagem; but it does not make it less amazing that the stratagem should have any effect.

The chief work of the Third Republic therefore has been the destruction of the influence of the Church in France, not only as a society but as the vehicle of an ethical doctrine, and the

corresponding establishment—by politicians construing Renan like village schoolmasters—of a secular society based on unbelief. This, of course, was dangerous, because the effects of unbelief on societies have never been known to be less pernicious than those of fanaticism; but it was dangerous from another point of view. It created in a country which had the incredible luck not to be divided by various religious creeds a state of division as bitter as may have existed in Germany or England in the worst post-reformation times. As usual this fever of controversy and persecution had for its immediate consequence the blinding of those whom it possessed to any other object. For the questions: What are the Germans doing in Asia? What are the Italians planning in the Holy Land? was substituted the haunting problem: How can the Republic get rid of the Church, of her creed, and of her influence?

Needless to say how this one-sided attention helped the deterioration of the country. Anti-Christianity, limited as it was under the Empire to a few Parisian circles, would only have lasted as long as the belief in Science; poured into broad popular currents, it poisoned the reserves of national life. No greater folly could well be conceived than that of a Government not only witnessing but procuring this state of dissociation,

and proclaiming itself highly patriotic at the same time.

9. *The Public Spirit. Illusions and Vulgarity.*

If religion were still a great factor in the life of France, or if it were practised by the majority instead of by a decidedly small minority, the unification of the Republicans through an anti-religious policy would have been impossible. As it was, the French Catholics, too few or too weak, and hampered besides by the Concordat, which gradually became an unbreakable bond, did not show fight, and, instead of a religious war, France only saw a religious persecution. This persecution might have been violent. It hardly ever was. Those who carried it on realised that when the clergy had been so harassed that nobody could believe in its occult power, its chief *raison d'être* would be at an end, and they proceeded cautiously and methodically. In this way nobody ever complained very loudly; it was only during the Combes Government that Europe became aware of a dangerous example of legal robbery, so that which might have been a source of indignation, and consequently of energy, was only the slow weakening of a great moral influence.

On the whole, while an anarchical form of

Democracy was diminishing the chances of France on all sides, the public spirit was optimistic, or at any rate apathetic. and people lived on illusions and short-sighted selfishness.

The politicians set the example of perfect satisfaction. They pretended every now and then to have great fears of a reaction which would bring back a Monarchy or a Dictatorship with all their abuses and the tyranny of the Church to boot, but only once—during the few months in which the Boulangist agitation was at its height—were they really sincere. They lived in the vain amusements of their party politics, and in the enjoyment of unhoped-for power; remote as they were from any ambition to influence European politics, they cherished the comforting illusion that peace never brings on war, and that France might dwindle while others grew, but they at all events would not be affected by the diminution.

Their electors were as blind. Everybody who is attentive to the variations of public opinion must know how difficult it is to resist them, how unavailing mere logic is when it has to withstand the quiet certainties of the millions, and how inclined the philosopher himself is to doubt his own conclusions in the presence of a sceptical public spirit. Now, logic and even mere investigation were seldom brought to bear upon the anomalous situation which the preponderance of profes-

sional politicians had created and kept up in France. The Constitution was known to be a paradox, but it might be amended. Something was sure to happen; a man could not but arise; the Republic was so young, it would be absurd to despond over it before giving it a fair trial. Besides it was evidently useless to struggle against it. The Revolution was one great fact which outweighed many logical principles; it was also a fact that its main notions were in the air everywhere, and that no human power could resist them. There were signs of an imminent change even in Turkey, and in Russia. Republics were bound to succeed Monarchies in Europe as in America, and was it not better for a country to have forestalled the inevitable transformations? The French Republic was in the hands of the Freemasons, no doubt, and this was productive of woes, but the Freemasons could not go on for ever, and was it not remarkable that their everlastingly-repeated motto, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, was after all an epitome of the gospel? Some day, surely, these words would be something better than empty sounds, and an era of idealism and prosperity should begin.

It is so true that this confidence in an unforeseen development was universal that in 1890, twelve years after the first indications of the Republican ill-will against Catholicism—when Leo XIII advised the French clergy to adhere

unreservedly to the Republic and to preach loyalty to their flocks—the enthusiasm was almost universal; all the younger men had long anticipated the Pope's advice and welcomed it as a liberation from trammels.

This generous hope in the future was not founded exclusively on dreams and clouds. Facts would frequently give croakers the lie. The colonial policy was more a success than a failure; Ferry and his disciples were succeeded by Méline—a converted Communist—and by Hanotaux; the Russian alliance was an event which could not be exaggerated; trade was said to be flat, but statistics proved that it was not so; as to fears of war, for ever circulated, for ever belied by events, they were bugbears which grew to be the more disbelieved as they were more talked about.

On the whole, there ran deep in France an undercurrent of the enthusiasm which had fancied the Republic so fair while the Empire was old and tottering, and, this enthusiasm preventing any attempt at a reasoned criticism of the Constitution and anticipation of its inevitable shortcomings, delusions and optimism prevailed. Such a state of public opinion is apt to be translated into florid political speeches or into occasional popular demonstrations, and of these there was great plenty. But speeches and demonstrations correspond only to paroxysms, and between such

outbursts the philosophy of the man in the street is dominant. But that of the newspaper-reader, with enough leisure to know what he thinks and enough of the hereditary French outspokenness not to be afraid of the expression of his thoughts, is active. This latent philosophy of the Third Republic was by no means of the high or noble order.

Lurking more or less deeply under the surface is the belief of great and small in Progress: the certainty that Science, that is to say Light, must produce civilisation and prosperity; this is the basis of the universal optimism. But beside this, there is the moral pessimism distinguishable in all the literary forms of the nineteenth century, and above all in the Naturalism which is characteristically the literature of this age. Ideas are great and noble, but men are low, selfish, and frequently hypocritical. Politicians above all are coarse charlatans, and it takes the stupidity of the mob to be taken in by their claptrap. Rich people are selfish, and tyrannical to cruelty; but the poor would be as bad if they were rich. Everybody is selfish. The only philosophical statement that is never challenged is the utilitarian postulate: whatever we do is done out of self-interest, and virtue properly analysed is the most refined form of selfishness. This, added to the current notions about the non-existence of free-will, leaves everybody satisfied with his own

mediocrity and secretly elated at discovering in himself the vague generosity bound with the formulæ bequeathed by the Revolution. "We are pretty low, but we might be much worse," probably would express the universal feeling. In this way pessimism is once more corrected into a sort of optimism.

Political scepticism is as widely spread as its philosophical counterpart. Even literary people are extremely ignorant of history, and build their judgments upon psychological analyses which they generalise freely. The idea is that abuses have always existed, and exist or will soon exist everywhere. The true philosophy is to make up one's mind that things will not mend in our lifetime, and that the inevitable improvement which the *Deus ex machina*, Progress, will some day bring about will be so slow that its witnesses can hardly perceive it, and consequently they will not be better off than we are. When comparisons between neighbouring countries and France are suggested, a doubtful shrug is all that is vouchsafed in answer: who can verify those statements? besides, what does it matter? all civilised countries are in the same boat: if some are in a clearer or happier condition than the others, they will either be soon corrupted down to the common level or, on the contrary, their superiority must in time act as a ferment to the benefit of the others.

The only possibility that is really dreaded is a war, but that possibility luckily is but a product of ancestral imaginations; in fact war is an impossibility. Governments realise that conditions are changed, that what used to be gained in past times by territorial expansion is now gained by greater facilities for commerce; it is proved scientifically that a successful war is as disastrous as a defeat; besides, governments are not alone the arbitrators of peace nowadays; even the humblest peasant has his say, and the international press—in close connexion with the international finance—is his organ as well as his defender. No, wars are impossibilities; alliances are lightning conductors conceived in a manner entirely new and civilised: the only thing is to live and let live, and not be disturbed by bugbears.

This last formula leads directly to the peaceful and often smiling, but at core cowardly indulgence which is characteristic of the Third Republic. There being no obvious patriotic ideal, and the government impressing individuals with a marked idea that legislation is made for them and not for society, there cannot be any such patriotism as is to be seen in Germany, Italy, the United States, and especially Japan. Each one thinks of himself and says it with perfect frankness. Money is despised instead of being cherished, as it was in past ages, for purposes worth the while, but it is

universally sought as the only means of making life enjoyable. For the same reason the ancient views concerning the family are not only discarded but ridiculed, and Malthusianism is preached unblushingly with the constant connivance of the government.

Selfishness is never cheerful, and this period is no exception: there is a sort of dreary gaiety in life and literature and on the stage—the admixture of pessimism, of excitement often artificially created, of frankness constantly exaggerated to cynicism, and of unmanliness complacently displayed which modern slang calls *veulerie*. Read the works of Gyp, of Lavedan, of Donnay, and of their numberless imitators: you will see the same enervation made pitiful by its very consciousness: all these people have not much brains, apparently little heart, often the coarse manners which Jewish materialism diffuses with money, but they know their degradation, they analyse it, and they would suffer from it if their emotions were not so completely blunted.

All the vices which people had without quite realising them under the Empire these degenerates have with full consciousness. There is an abyss between them and the characters of Augier, for instance, who only seem as if they were trying to be *roués*.

It would be superfluous to say that all these dreamers, money-makers, or pleasure-seekers are

incapable of the intellectual attitude which, from the patriotic standpoint, alone matters: they never look beyond their immediate circle of needs or passions, and the relation of France to the rest of Europe is as indifferent to them as if their home were really Sirius.

To conclude: in 1898, almost thirty years after the war, France appears much more remote from the possibility of la Revanche than in 1875. Her rivals, especially Germany and Italy, have progressed while she remained stationary at home, and only expanded overseas where—owing to the lack of a navy—her power is almost nominal. Her real masters are irresponsible assemblies chosen without any respect to her vital interests as a nation, and the divisions and contradictions of these assemblies are glaringly visible. She has no settled policy in Europe, and her alliance with Russia bears in consequence the appearance more of a protection than of an alliance for definite purposes. Of the lack of a responsible authority, and of the gradual settling of the country into the position of a nation of second order, or what one begins to call a *puissance d'appui*, the public is only vaguely aware and cares little. They console themselves with a philosophy based on the inevitableness of universal decline, and above all with the new facilities for making money: the feeling which the foreigner who observed France the most care-

fully during that period [1] met with everywhere is expressed in the stereotyped phrase : I take no interest in politics. In fact, politics seem to be left entirely to themselves ; that is to say, a certain number of ideas called Republican are exploited by a few hundred professionals who, unable to criticise them, but finding it easy to handle them against less unscrupulous rivals, lose their heads over them, as speculators do in a boom. It is to this kind of intoxication that the period ending in 1898 leads us, and during the following seven years, which we shall presently review, a sort of destructive folly possesses politicians ; they wildly go to work, and what they do is nothing short of a sackage of France in the name of reason and justice.

1898–1905

10. *Deterioration of France by International Socialism.*

It is remarkable that this period does not coincide entirely with what it is agreed to call " bad governments." In 1898, the Fashoda incident and the return of a new Chamber compelled M. Méline to give up office, but M. Dupuy, who succeeded him, with M. de Freycinet as Foreign Minister, held the same principles. Moreover, to all intents and purposes, the same spirit of modera-

[1] Mr. Bodley in his admirable work, *France*.

tion which M. Spuller had termed *l'esprit nouveau* prevailed in the Cabinet. Yet it is impossible not to date the great disorganisation of France from 1898, and this shows how inefficient even good men can be under a Constitution like that of 1875. A spirit spread over France which first of all nullified the good intentions of M. Dupuy and later of M. Waldeck-Rousseau, and in four years' time this destructive spirit produced M. Combes. It is needless to remind the reader that the period of violence which will be known in history as Combism was prepared by the apparent idealism of the Dreyfusist agitation.

11. *Dreyfusism.*

For many years it was impossible to speak of the Dreyfus affair, no matter how historically, without giving offence: one had to be warmly favourable to Dreyfus or run the risk of being regarded as meanly opposed to him, and under such circumstances any attempt at a matter-of-fact presentment of the events and their concatenation was out of the question. To-day, the lesson of history has gradually become known, even to people living out of France, and one may safely say, what I just hinted at, and what is as clear as daylight, viz. that Combism came out of Dreyfusism as the steam out of heat.

The chief facts of the case are in every memory.

In 1895, Captain Dreyfus was condemned to perpetual imprisonment on the charge of delivering important military documents to a foreign power, and there were no protests against the verdict: a number of French officers about whose honour there could be no doubt had expressed their conviction that Dreyfus was guilty, and few voices were heard in his defence. The condemnation was welcomed with loud applause by the many Frenchmen who had sided with the famous journalist, Edouard Drumont, in his long campaign against the Jews. To Drumont the Jew was objectionable, not because of his religion, but on account of his race and of the characteristics which belong to it. The Jews were not French, and never could be French. They lived in France, as everywhere else, as if they were encamped, getting as much as they could out of the country but always ready to emigrate to another if they thought it advantageous. So it was absurd to speak without noticing the impropriety of "Jewish officers in the French army": one might as well have spoken of "German officers in the French army." All the mistake came from regarding the Jew as merely a person of another religion. It was clear that the treason of Dreyfus—demonstrated as it seemed to be in 1895—was an irrefutable proof of the soundness of Drumont's theory, and the satisfaction of his supporters or admirers was perfect jubilation.

The irritation of other people was no less. The Jews naturally felt the weight of a sentence which seemed to fall heavily upon them, but for other reasons many Frenchmen disliked it as much as they did. The army in 1895 was as popular as ever it had been since the days of Napoleon the First, and the debates of the Court-Martial, with a revelation of the danger to which the military preparation of France had been exposed, had only made it the more popular. Yet, as I said, there were dissenters. The jealousy which the politicians of the Third Republic felt from the first against the army, its dashing brilliance, its order, its disciplined intelligence, and above all the everlasting possibility of some exceptionally popular officer throwing civilian rivals into the shade, existed also to some extent among the *bourgeoisie*. Young men belonging to those classes, and compelled to serve like everybody else, resented having to obey peasant petty officers. Many whom the dry intellectual spirit of the times had impregnated from their infancy, and who affected to admit no superiority except that of the brain, spoke of their military service as a sort of martyrdom during which culture had to submit to brute force, and intelligence was degraded to mean employments. These people had seen with displeasure popular favour greet the General Staff on many occasions during the first proceedings of the Affair. When, in 1897, rumours

began to be circulated that everything had not been perfectly regular in the judgment of 1895, it is not to be wondered at if these rumours were welcomed with intense interest. And when, in August 1898, an officer, who was an anti-Semite too, revealed that one of the chief documents which had helped in inclining the opinion of the Court-Martial against Dreyfus had been forged by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry, there was such an outburst as those who witnessed it can never forget. In a moment the whole outlook changed: Dreyfus appeared as a martyr, and the General Staff, including three Ministers of War who had been unanimous in their conviction that the officer was guilty, seemed to be nothing else than the accomplices of a forger. In a few weeks the case ceased to be a local affair to become the most exciting judiciary drama of modern times. In every part of Europe, Dreyfus found friends not only among his co-religionists who, even in poor Russian villages, subscribed towards his justification, but among all those who imagined with increasing indignation that justice had been denied an innocent man. Few were the men famous in literature or science who did not express their feelings in public utterances.

Often one could detect in these declarations the lurking suspicion that Dreyfus had been condemned in a Catholic country because he was not a Catholic, and so the ill-treated officer became

doubly a martyr. Often also it was evident that people who from some racial antagonism hated France were glad of this chance to vent their ill-will. At any rate the state of opinion was such that the campaign in favour of Dreyfus seemed more like a crusade, but a crusade of which indignation and hatred more than love and reverence were the chief elements.

The last months of 1898 and most of 1899 were filled by this overwhelming agitation, and it mattered little that M. Dupuy or anybody else was at the head of affairs. Common parlance alludes to the previous years as the Méline Government, but the twelvemonth preceding July 1899 is never spoken of as the Dupuy Government: it is simply called "the time of the Affair."

In July 1899 M. Dupuy fell, and it became evident that the Cabinet which succeeded his would be chosen exclusively to supervise the revision of Dreyfus's case. M. Poincaré, the future President of the Republic, failed in forming a Cabinet, owing to M. Léon Bourgeois' aversion to responsibilities, and the mission was finally entrusted to M. Waldeck-Rousseau. This gentleman was a barrister of high fame and standing, with an eminently judicial head, and a self-control which in the Chamber as well as at the Law Courts secured him respect and influence. Politically, he had always been considered a

Moderate, and even a touch of anti-clericalism did not make him lose this label. It appeared probable from the moment his name was mentioned that he would devote his cool energies and his professional capacities to an entirely judicial termination of the case over which the whole world hung breathless.

However, it is not easy to be a politician and to be purely judicial, even if one seems predestined for the task. There was universal surprise when M. Waldeck-Rousseau took into the Cabinet M. Millerand, who at the time was a very different man from what he is to-day, and embodied, even more than M. Jaurès, the most uncompromising Socialism. But M. Millerand was very like M. Waldeck-Rousseau in many ways, clear-headed, business-like, persevering, and above the suspicion of dishonesty. Probably the new Prime Minister thought rather of his collaborator's abilities than of the political tendency he represented, and did not suspect that the Socialists would be raised by the elevation of their leader to a position they had never occupied before. He was right about M. Millerand, whose tenure of office made him grow to be the unique statesman we have known him since, but, as I shall presently show, he made a mistake about the consequences of choosing a Minister from among a group which, until then, had been regarded as gratuitously violent and possessed of no positive influence.

In September 1899 Dreyfus was tried again by a Court-Martial at Rennes, once more declared guilty of treason by five votes against two, but this time it was with extenuating circumstances, and almost immediately M. Waldeck-Rousseau issued a decree pardoning him. Dreyfus accepted his pardon and the Affair itself seemed practically closed, but Dreyfusism did not disappear with the pretext which had given rise to it. There remained a group of personal friends of Dreyfus who went on with the legal agitation until they had him rehabilitated, not by a Court-Martial but by the Court of Cassation, and somewhat irregularly. Above all, the many people who had seen in the Affair a peg on which to hang their own animosities were more flushed than sobered by the step taken by M. Waldeck-Rousseau, and after the fight they insisted on revenge. The chief enemy had been the General Staff, and in fact the army with all the manifestations of the military spirit. But many of the Staff officers were supposed to be practising Catholics and likely to be influenced by the Jesuits; the hypocrisy or prejudices of some Frenchmen, helped by the ignorance of millions of foreigners of the real state of France, had presented the Dreyfus Affair as a case of religious persecution, and the Church was denounced as bitterly as the army.

While the trial at Rennes was going on, there was a riot in Paris—the first that had been seen

since the Commune—and the leaders had as their chief object the destruction of a Church, which, in fact, was pillaged. Besides, it has been a constant tradition with the Third Republic to create unanimity against the Church among politicians whenever divisions on other subjects became alarming, and this was a rare occasion for reconciling the Radicals with the rising Socialist party. M. Waldeck-Rousseau soon announced his intention to take measures against the *moines ligueurs et marchands*, meaning the Jesuits and the Assumptionists who at the time edited the *Croix* newspaper and had been resolute anti-Dreyfusists.

M. Waldeck-Rousseau, in an address which he delivered later on at Toulouse, spoke his mind openly on the subject of the religious orders. Evidently his own opinion was not only that some religious orders were unduly mixed up in politics, and that the education given in the Jesuits' schools divided the French youth into two antagonistic portions, but also that religious vows in themselves were unnatural and in contradiction with the modern notion of human liberty. But he was too much of a legalist to make such a doctrine the basis of a new legislation, and whatever may have been the influence upon him of the anti-religious atmosphere or of his own well-known wrongs, the law with which he wanted to hit at the influence of the Jesuits and the Assumptionists did not wear the appearance of

an exception. At the beginning of the twentieth century, while all the other countries, including so-called benighted monarchies, had long legislated on the right of association, the French Republic had no Association Law, and its absence was one of the standing grievances of the Socialists. M. Waldeck-Rousseau therefore placed a Bill for the regularisation of associations on the table of the Chamber. This Bill made it compulsory for every association not already approved by previous laws or decrees to state its object, give in the names of its members, and demand a special authorisation. A great many religious orders like the Sulpitians, the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Charity, &c., had long been approved, and, consequently need not apply for authorisation, but hundreds of other orders merely existed on tolerance, and would be compelled by the new law to put in a declaration, and demand an authorisation, which, of course, Parliament would only grant with the greatest caution. Among the number were the Jesuits and Assumptionists, whose doom was inevitable, whether they applied for an authorisation sure to be refused, or preferred the simpler course of dispersing of their own accord.

The Association Bill only became law in 1901. Many religious communities—like the Benedictines now at Quarr Abbey, in the Isle of Wight—thought it more dignified to leave the country

before its enactment, and it soon appeared that this had been wisdom too; the rest submitted to the law, sent in the names of their members and the inventory of their property, and demanded authorisation. But as they did so, the anti-religious feeling in the Chamber, in the press, and often in the country, became worse instead of decreasing. M. Waldeck-Rousseau appeared more and more as the only Moderate in his Cabinet, and the whole atmosphere seemed charged with threats. It was obvious that the hatred which had been roused by the Affair would not be satisfied until revenge had been wreaked; and while the Prime Minister did his best to adjust things according to his judicial spirit, it seemed impossible that his *entourage* should use the new law as a law and not as a weapon.

12. *Combism.*

The general election of 1902 returned a stronger Socialist group than there had been in the outgoing Chamber. M. Waldeck-Rousseau probably felt that his supporters might soon become his masters, and he would not take the risk. He went out before the new Chamber met, and advised President Loubet to apply to M. Combes for the formation of a new Cabinet.

M. Combes, though he never was in orders, had

worn the clerical habit for several years before taking up medicine, and gradually politics, in the department of Charente. Politics had introduced him to Freemasonry, and when the sometime *abbé* got himself elected a deputy, he was as anti-clerical as could be desired. He soon specialised in educational legislation, preparing at least two Bills of a decidedly Erastian character, and not afraid of the drastic appearance he gave to their application. Nobody said anything against his integrity, and he was supposed to be well-informed. But whether he had not more shrewdness than intelligence, and more obstinacy than real will-power, was a problem which people generally solved against him. It would be astonishing that such a man should have been chosen by the wise Waldeck-Rousseau, if it were not an historical law of the Third Republic that its leaders are led.

As I said above, the Socialist party was stronger in the Chamber of 1902 than in the previous one, and its leader was at present Jean Jaurès. The passage of M. Millerand through office had done what it invariably does for every well-balanced mind: it had given him a sense of realities. From a Socialist with the usual systematic views, and a ringleader with the proper amount of recklessness, he had become the decided Reformist he has been since as Minister of Labour and the patriot he showed himself as Minister of War. At any rate, he was regarded in 1902—when

people still believed that Socialist deputies were formidable dare-devils ready for the universal overthrow or *chambardement*—as too much of a *bourgeois* to represent the party; and Jaurès—who, on the contrary, was a converted *bourgeois*—had taken his place.

M. Combes chose to place the centre of his majority as near as possible to the Extreme Left, and immediately Jaurès with his eloquence, his warm-heartedness, the admixture of vagueness and audacity of his conceptions, above all, with the tactical dexterity which his turgidness would not seem to indicate, became the real leader of the Cabinet. Nobody exemplified to greater perfection the true Dreyfusist spirit as distinguished from personal devotion to Dreyfus. He had been a professor, and a professor of philosophy—at a time when philosophy was either the crudest mechanism or the most unreal Idealism—and his tendency was towards the latter in its vaguest form. He was typically what the cant of the day called an "intellectual"—that is to say, a man bred in the purely speculative tradition of the early Taine and the early Renan, and completely ignorant of other realities than the hagglings and bargainings of parliamentary groups or electoral committees. A sort of prophet withal, but a prophet in words, not in true visions: his rich, organ-like voice, the volume of his periods, the belief in his words which such men

frequently have because of the real though dim conviction existing in their subconsciousness, lent a certain efficiency to the words Progress, Ideal, Fraternity, endlessly repeated in his speeches. But there was no divine insight in him, and his power depended on his voice. Thus equipped, he went on preaching the abolition of classes, of hatreds, of frontiers of all kinds; he prophesied the reign of justice and the end of war, of gold, of superstition. The Dreyfus Affair, with the outburst of generosity it had created, leading the French to sacrifice everything dearest to them to one man for the sake of justice, seemed to him the beginning of the new era, and as, for the first time, he had behind him forty or fifty deputies, it seemed as if all his predictions were half fulfilled already. This was the man to whose vote the new Prime Minister was not afraid to attach his destinies.

For if the word Combism connotes a spirit and the manifestations of that spirit which the following chapters will recapitulate, it also represents a political system which had never been tested before, and which lasted during three years. No Prime Minister ever realised so perfectly as M. Combes that he was nothing but an intermediary between the pleasure of the Chamber and the administration of affairs, or acted as consistently with that belief. Every day the Cabinet would meet as usual at the Elysée, and

the routine of government seemed to be the same as ever; but every day also a consultation of a much more practical character was held at the Chamber or in the Premier's office. There M. Combes met the chiefs or whips of the various groups, not, of course, in the whole Chamber, but in the majority, submitted to them the order of the day, took their opinion, made sure by a very simple calculation of the number of votes that each opinion represented, and decided upon ministerial action accordingly. This substitution of a few influential deputies for the Cabinet nullified, of course, the power of the President, that of the Senate, the responsibility of the Ministers, and the will of that portion of the country which the minority platonically represents; all this was in the true Jacobin tradition, but it was also in the spirit of the constitution logically interpreted, and protests were few and feeble.

It was natural that in these daily conventions M. Jaurès should be the principal orator. One sign to his group would have been enough to bring about the downfall of the Cabinet, and the Socialist leader occupied the privileged situation of the man who all the time sacrifices his real wishes to those of the less daring men he condescends to support. In fact, the three years of M. Combes' office were also the three years of M. Jaurès' hegemony. Until 1905 the policy of

the Cabinet was exactly that which would have been adopted had the Socialist leader been the actual Premier, and popular feeling was not deceived by appearances. The singing at official ceremonies of the *Internationale* instead of the *Marseillaise*, in the presence of the undisturbed Prime Minister, was the clear manifestation of the true state of affairs. But the reader ought not to infer that Socialist legislation was continuously passed during that period. In 1902, the Socialists, being for the first time in unquestioned ascendancy, appeared formidable both from their loud doctrine and their number. But since then, we have realised that a Socialist deputy is a *bourgeois* even if he was a workman a few weeks before; we have also heard M. Jaurès repeatedly promise what he called "a vast legislative text," embodying his doctrine for practical purposes, and we have seen him everlastingly evade the fulfilment of his promise; for years he conducted the work of the Chamber without even producing an Income Tax Law. We are not, therefore, very much surprised to find, on looking back to the history of Combism, that it was much more a systematic destruction than a rebuilding of society. In fact, the next chapters will be exclusively filled with what the Chamber did against this or that; and I should be very much at a loss to state any improvement or even any positive step due to its initiative.

In what spirit all this destruction was carried on is not clear to everybody. If you read the reminiscences of men like M. Péguy or M. Daniel Halévy, or if you listen to less-known witnesses of the Dreyfusist drama, you will often be led to conclude that a considerable amount of genuine Idealism and true human kindness was wasted during those eventful years. But if you go back to the newspapers of the period, dip into the Parliamentary proceedings in the *Officiel*, or consult your own impression of the atmosphere created by M. Combes' brutality, ill-breeding, recklessness are the words which come naturally to your lips. The chief motive of the action of the politicians seems to have been the delight of going to work violently without any danger to themselves, and the Idealism appears only to have been the cherished illusion of a few individuals, cleverly used by Jaurès to cover the vulgarity of the rest. Yet thousands of excellent Frenchmen who had been convinced Dreyfusists remained in the Dreyfusist state of mind long after Dreyfusism had passed into Combism, and looked on the policy of revenge without being able to make up their minds that they connived at an anti-patriotic work. Even at the present day the bewilderment in which they find themselves leaves them doubtful and hesitating where men with a larger share of the national temperament will not waver a moment.

13. *Combism and the Church.*

The quarrel of the Dreyfusists was apparently with the army, but it was also with the Church, which had abetted the officers, and M. Combes' anti-clerical feelings, along with the opportunity which the Association Law offered, were sure to keep his attention at first on the religious orders. We know with certitude what M. Waldeck-Rousseau's intentions had been with regard to them. He had no sympathy with the Jesuits, and he felt an especial dislike against the Assumptionists, whom he had once described as "trading, plotting monks." About these his mind was evidently made up. There was also a clause in the Association Law which its author must have known to be irreconcilable with the continuance of the more important orders. The Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans, &c., are, like the Jesuits, responsible only to the Pope, and highly value their exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. Now, M. Waldeck-Rousseau wanted all orders to be in future under the Bishops who should answer to the Government for their action. This condition, of course, made authorisation an impossibility for those who would not or could not renounce their privilege. In spite of this unfortunate circumstance, it seemed that the Act was bringing the orders, which the Concordat of 1802 had ignored, under the protection which the same

Concordat bestowed on the Bishops and secular clergy. In fact, M. Waldeck-Rousseau had been able to say without fear of contradiction, that he was giving the monks and nuns their saving charter. For there was little doubt that the congregations that applied for authorisation would easily get it, and they were by no means degrading themselves by submitting to a measure which, with one exceptional clause, was only the common law of the land. It must be confessed that the exception to which I am alluding, was not in keeping with the rest of M. Waldeck-Rousseau's liberal dispositions. Whereas authorisation would only be granted to an individual order by an Act of Parliament and after a debate in the Chamber or Senate, the same could always be revoked by a decree from the Council of Ministers; so, it took the consent of the country —as represented by Parliament—to give legal existence to a religious association, but an arbitrary act of the Government was enough to withdraw it. This certainly was not democratic, but it could be interpreted as a barrier against clericalism, and not an obstacle in the way of the religious life of the country. On the whole, when M. Waldeck-Rousseau retired, the views of Government in connection with Catholicism might be construed as hardly different from those which prevailed in the days when the sovereign could be on his guard against episcopal interference,

without disbelieving a word of the Bishops' teaching.

All this assumed a completely different appearance the moment M. Combes took office, and the Association Law, instead of a charter, became a weapon which the new Prime Minister handled sometimes brutally, sometimes with astuteness, changing freely besides its interpretation and even its letter. The law said that each demand for authorisation was to be separately examined by the Chamber or Senate. M. Combes decided that all the applications should be thrown into three sections, and not examined separately, but accepted or rejected in a lump. This showed the evident intention to make short work of the orders, and the issue did not belie the forecast. It will remain in the history of France as a monstrous injustice that a law should have been used as a decoy, even if it had not been devised as one. All the applications were rejected, the confiscation of the property of religious orders was pronounced, and the lamentable sight of the dispersion of poor monks and nuns who had always lived in communities began to sicken all except politicians. The religious who had some hope of being able to reform themselves abroad left France for England, Belgium, Spain, Italy, or America. The rest were compelled to stay singly where they were, in great risk of the calamities which M. René Bazin describes in *l'Isolée.*

There was a universal feeling of compassion among those who could do nothing to remedy this state of affairs, but M. Combes found numberless apologists in Parliament and in the press. Those who observed the public spirit at that time were shocked to find how easily the average man gets reconciled to injustice the moment it is done and the ghost of a reason can be found for it. The reason in this case was an ideology in the truest spirit of the Revolution. Man, it was argued, is entitled to as much freedom as will not be hurtful to his neighbour, but it does not follow —as would at first sight appear—that monasticism should be tolerated on the plea that a man may be a monk if he chooses to become one. The other side of the argument is that nobody ought to be suffered to renounce his own personality by taking the vows of obedience, poverty, and celibacy. As a conclusion, it appeared that M. Combes had, after all, been a champion of liberty and a redeemer of slaves, even if he acted rather too energetically.

There was another corollary which was even more logical. If the religious vows were so immoral that their immorality warranted the refusal of authorisation to the orders which applied for it, that must be a sufficient reason for the withdrawal of authorisation from those which already possessed it. The principle—strictly a jurist's principle—of the Act of 1901, was against this

further step, but the Premier might plead that the Act contained a clause empowering the Cabinet to withdraw authorisation whenever they thought it advisable; and besides, another Bill could easily be introduced to amend the Act. In fact, in March 1904, a Bill was read, depriving the teaching orders—already authorised—of their legal existence. It was passed in July of the same year, and immediately the process of expulsion and confiscation was resumed.

The whole proceeding reminded one forcibly of the terrible anecdote of the Toulon massacres in 1793. The royalist prisoners had been arranged in a compact square on the parade ground, and the *commissaires* ordered artillery to be fired at them until nobody was left standing. Then the *commissaires* walked up to the awful spot, and fearing lest some of the prisoners should pretend death and meditate flight, they called out loud : " Let those who are not dead get up, the Republic pardons them." Here and there a few men rose from the heap, and were promptly cut down again.

Placing a whole category of citizens outside the law for so-called philosophical reasons, expulsions, confiscations, are of a poor moral effect in a country. The immediate consequence of the religious persecution was to sharpen the appetites of the Socialists in and out of Parliament, and to persuade them that the nationalisation of

the larger enterprises—the railways, mines, &c.—could be accomplished without danger. But there was another. The monastic orders were the chief instrument of French influence abroad, especially in the East, and the damage to this influence soon became perceptible, and in a few years appeared irreparable. The Government had not been logical enough to apply to the communities at Constantinople or Beyrouth the treatment they dealt to the sister convents in Paris, but it was inevitable that the suppression of the novitiates at home should promptly reduce the numbers of the religious abroad. Due warning was given on this point to the Chamber by M. de Mun, M. Denys Cochin, and other specialists on the Eastern questions; it was clearly pointed out that the gradual stepping in of the excommunicate King of Italy with *his* monks and nuns, which we have seen of late years, was a certainty; but the majority of M. Combes had already taken the habit of answering such arguments with the superb disdain of ignorance and stupidity by the crushing remark that foreign considerations ought not to be suffered in the home politics of France. It is the classic speech of the madman who sets his house on fire to the neighbours who send for the fire brigade.

14. *Combism and Rome.*

The clause in the Association Law which substituted the Bishops for the Pope as answerable for the doings of the monastic orders amounted to a solemn declaration of mistrust against Rome, and the logic of Combism was sure to evolve a legislation from it. It had long been the habit of the Radicals, with M. Clemenceau as their mouthpiece, to speak of the Pope as a foreign sovereign with a permanent army of his own in France, and of the Concordat as a foolish agreement which devoted forty million francs every year to the maintenance of a hostile clergy. Such an absurdity ought to be done away with without delay: the French Embassy to the Vatican must be suppressed, the clergy left to its own devices, and the practice of the Catholic religion reduced to an individual concern. Many who held this thesis were merely indifferent to religion, and the apparent logic of Disestablishment, combined with the usual French ignorance of European consequences, seduced them. Many others, however, among whom no doubt M. Clemenceau, Jaurès, and generally the Freemasons, hoped and often professed their hope that, the support of the State once removed, the mouldy fabric of the Church would crumble to pieces, and science would be rid of the vain appearance which still stood between it and the popular

consciousness. A few intelligent politicians would answer the champions of destruction by pointing out that the suppression of the Concordat meant the loss for France of the long-valued protectorate of the Catholic Missions. A few jurists had an even more positive objection. The Concordat, they said, was a contract: when it was signed in 1802, the Government of France, which at the time did not profess to be exceptionally religious, was as anxious to see it in operation as the Pope, and consequently this contract could not be dissolved without a mutual consent; as to the forty millions yearly paid to the clergy, they were by no means a salary, they were a special fund consolidated at the time of the Concordat to prevent the clergy from suing the possessors of their property, and the true name of this fund was, it should not be forgotten, the Church Indemnity. Finally, there was the objection of the Gallicans—still more numerous than might have been supposed—who asked: What purpose will be gained by making the clergy entirely Roman instead of being national? If you are afraid of the Pope's influence in the present arrangement, how much more ought you not to dread it under a *régime* which would leave it unrestrained; of course, you can counteract this influence by forcible measures, but your action will inevitably wear the appearance of a persecution, and persecution is invariably ephemeral

because it is repellent; after a time you will find the Church embittered against you and less hampered in her action than she ever was under the Concordat; do not give up the reality for a hope; keep your hold upon her by preserving the right to appoint her Bishops.

All this common wisdom was wasted on people whom the intoxication of destruction was gaining more and more. Pretexts were sought to warrant the recall of the ambassador to the Vatican. A poor one was found in 1904 in a correspondence which the Pope had directly—instead of through the Ministry of Cults—with two bishops whose private life gave offence to their flocks. M. Delcassé wrote a short letter to the Secretary of State of Pope Pius X, stating that as the Vatican chose to correspond direct with the Bishops, no French representative was necessary in Rome. Almost immediately the Concordat was denounced and a special Bill—the Cultual Association Bill—was introduced to take its place. The whole of this Bill was inspired by the childish desire to legislate about the clergy without even naming the Pope or the Bishops, and by replacing them by associations of lay people who would be a sort of protecting barrier between the State and the unapproachable clergy. This Bill, passed in the summer of 1905, was to be enforced a year after, but after a year the Pope would not let the French clergy recognise a constitution which

ignored their bishops, and the Separation Law remained hanging in the air without anyone to apply it to. Immediately the Bishops were turned out of their palaces and the priests out of their rectories—which I must say they would only have kept a few years longer had the law been acted upon. The Church property was confiscated and made over to the municipal councils; even the foundations for the dead, held so sacred by the people, were given a secular destination. As to the churches, the government, not daring to take them away entirely from their occupants, made them over to the parishes on condition that they could not be used for secular purposes.

The whole thing was conducted roughly and brutally whenever it appeared safe. The government were not ashamed to have the archives of the Nuncio—left in Paris after his departure—seized by the police, and the correspondence of the Secretary of State since the Separation was published in the newspapers.

The scandal of such a method was bad enough, but the effects of the Separation were not visible at once. It took a few years to see how the process of confiscation had scared people, how deep the appropriation of church property had made the divisions between believers and unbelievers in rural parishes, how the sight of the parish priest turned out of his little house, of the Bishop dispossessed of a palace which was fre-

quently part of the cathedral, had created mistrust against the politicians, and anxiety among the faithful. It took even longer for many of the deputies who had supported the Separation Bill from indifference to religion to see that the resolution to govern a Catholic country in complete ignorance of the Pope—while Protestant monarchs frequently felt the need of a representative in Rome—was suicidal. In time, however, it appeared that Italy, Germany, and Spain were seizing every opportunity to substitute their protectorate for that of France in Asia Minor and northern Africa; and the moment the Morocco campaign began in earnest it was a grievous annoyance for the French officers to see that, owing to the obstinacy of the government, the priests who followed the army and took advantage of its advance were not French but Spanish.

The politicians who had brought about this state of affairs never seemed to regret their blindness until quite recent times. Most of them thought only of making the most of the weakened condition of the Church to do away with the Christian belief. The government of M. Combes was the heyday of the *Universités Populaires* in which night after night professors thought they did a great service to their country by proving scientifically to suburban audiences that God does not exist.

15. *Combism and the Army.*

The grudge which the government of M. Combes had against the Church they had even in a bitterer degree against the Army. There had always been a lurking antagonism between the Third Republic and the military element. The true founders of the republic, the friends of Gambetta, looked askance at those hundreds of thousands who said nothing, whose political sympathies were unknown or were only too easy to divine, who preferred the superiority of silence, obedience, and self-denial, while politicians were nothing but talk, self-assertion, and bare-faced interest. Year after year two hundred thousand young men, electors of to-morrow, were absorbed into that powerful body and taught to think nothing of words and be prepared for deeds. Professional democrats living in everlasting terror of "the Man," the possible Napoleon who would make short work of their edifice of abstractions, felt that he must be there and might any day reappear. The priest, the magistrate, and the scholar were the representatives in various forms of the same ideal built upon order and making for the restoration of order. That this tendency was essential to the greatness of France, and that the action of France beyond her frontiers intimately depended on it, was nothing to men with whom party interests alone counted.

It is not surprising therefore that the Dreyfus Affair, with the scandal of the Henry forgery, filled them with unbelievable joy, and that the verdict given at Rennes after the second judgment of the Court-Martial—which they thought must inevitably result in something like a solemn recantation—once more infuriated them. The combination of this spite with the more subtle spirit spread by Jaurès resulted in a campaign which even outlived Combism—for it lasted until 1910—and had for its obvious object not only to humble and even humiliate the army before the civic element, but entirely to change its temperament and lower its ideal through what was called progressive democratisation.

It is painful to relate that the work of retaliation was begun by General de Gallifet, a true soldier, and in many ways a true aristocrat, whom M. Waldeck-Rousseau had selected to liquidate the Dreyfus Affair. Gallifet did away with the Superior Council of War, an admirable organism created by M. de Freycinet—who was not a soldier—for the examination of the most vital military questions and the promotion of the likeliest officers. From that date, the decision on the most momentous issues was left entirely to the Minister of War, who might be a civilian and would seldom be very long in office.

Yet the successor of Gallifet at the end of 1899 was not a civilian, and he remained in office until

1904, but it was unfortunately to the detriment of the army. General André had had a brilliant career, which the envied direction of the *Ecole Polytechnique* had crowned, but it was the career of a functionary not of a soldier. General André had never been in the colonies, the only place where he might have learned what men like Duchesne or Gallieni knew so well; he was a theorist with a marked tendency to be a politician, and when he took office, it was well known that unfortunate habits of intemperance weakened what good points he might have. The present writer was a witness of a painful scene in the Chamber between him and M. Lasies, an ex-officer, in which he appeared as unmilitary as on the day when another deputy, Syveton, hit him in disgust and contempt before the whole assembly. As it is, nobody can say more for him than that he spent a great deal of labour over the realisation of the military ideas of the one man who provided ideas for all the members of the Combes cabinet, M. Jaurès.

The division between two men—the *Généralissime* or general-in-chief, and the *chef d'Etat-Major* or Staff commandant—of the supreme power in case of a war was the idea of General André, and it was undoubtedly the idea of a man who mistrusted generals and wanted to subordinate their authority to that of the government. The same mistrust, in the purest Dreyfusist spirit,

appeared even more visibly in the repeated attempts at doing away with the Courts-Martial or introducing into them enough non-military judges to modify completely their character. But these measures, the evident outcome of the Dreyfus Affair, were nothing compared to the slow and methodical progress of what was called the democratisation of the army.

No general could have shared more completely in the Socialists' belief that war—after thirty years of peace and the abandonment by the immense majority of the French of every idea of revenge against Germany—was an impossibility, and as there was in him a great deal of the humanitarian's zeal, he turned it towards a new conception of the military service. Not being a preparation for war, it must be a preparation for something else, and the regiments became sorts of schools, while the officers were expected to teach their men all the arts of peace. Lectures were given to them frequently, some of which—on bee-keeping, pigeon-raising, or rabbit-breeding, for instance—would have often been much better if they had been the work of experienced privates instead of the random effort of their chiefs to be useful according to the new formula.

The regiments, instead of being frequently transferred, as had been the tradition in the old army, were kept in the same towns, and the recruits never were sent away from their native districts.

The service, which in the first years of the Republic still lasted five years, had been gradually reduced first to four and then to three years. Many officers declared that a new reduction was impossible, because it would make the training of cavalry men impossible, and above all because the numbers of the French Army would become ridiculous compared with those of the enormous military masses of Germany. But this under the rule of M. Jaurès was no argument, since perfect amity prevailed between the Socialists in the Reichstag and those in the Chamber, and they would not allow of a barbarous breach of such a union. Finally the service was curtailed to two years, and the reduction was welcomed even more jubilantly by politicians than by the young men who were benefited by it.

Meanwhile the effort begun by General André to bring down the officers to a truly democratic level was carried on methodically. In 1907 a decree was published reforming the old order of precedence at official ceremonies, and pushing back the commandant of an army corps (of which there are only twenty) far behind a prefect (of whom there are nearly a hundred). The right of punishing for offences in the service was considerably restricted; the officers' mess-tables were suppressed so that officers should be compelled to mix more freely with the civilians in garrison towns; the old regulations making it imperative

that an officer should not marry into any family unable to settle a certain sum on the wife were abolished, and as the pay remained ridiculously insufficient, the social background of many army men became inferior in consequence. All these restrictions tended to hamper or belittle the army. Something worse remained to be done, which was to lower its spirit. The methods to which M. Combes and General André resorted will long be remembered as excesses of which even an Oriental autocracy would be ashamed, and they elicited from M. Millerand the famous speech in which he branded the Combes government as a *régime abject.* M. Combes was not qualmish about methods. He seems to have been the inventor of the *délégues cantonaux*—unofficial representatives of the prefects in every *chef-lieu de canton,* who not only could veto the decisions of municipal councils and mayors by reporting them at headquarters, but made themselves useful as discreet informants, *i.e.,* in plain language, spies.

This institution was extended by General André to the army. Scandalous debates in the Chamber, coming after the revelations of a clerk, showed to the bewildered public that the Minister of War had entrusted to the Freemasons the police of the army. The Lodge in each garrison town was watching the officers, taking note of who went to church, and who did not, who went there with his wife—which was venial—or went there with a prayer book—

which was unforgivable; who paid his court to M. le Préfèt and Madame la Préfète, and who kept aloof in evident disrespect to the Republic. One military bootmaker in a regiment was an accomplished spy, and for many months practically browbeat all his chiefs. In a few cases, officers who were Freemasons demeaned themselves lower than outside observers by sheer tale-bearing. In a short time there was in the army—which gives up the franchise so as not to seem in any way political—an abominable distinction between so-called republican and non-republican officers, and a feeling of mistrust prevailed where comradeship had been for so many years the rule.

The consequence was that the officers who remained true to the ideal which had attracted so many of them into the army after 1870 felt numberless frictions, while the noble trade of soldiering became with many others a mere *métier*. And this *métier* being underpaid, it was natural that they should cast about for remedies and pecuniary improvements. There were no other means at hand than those used by everybody else, viz. agitation and association. We saw the appearance of a new military paper, *Armée et Démocratie*, which might have been the organ of a syndicate, and in fact its creation was promptly followed by an agitation with a view to the creation of military unions similar to the trades unions.

So, at a moment when the conclusions drawn by

experts from the Manchurian War all pointed to the superiority of character over mere knowledge and of a true spirit of discipline and self-denial, Combism demoralised the army, made officers dissatisfied with their lot, and spread the selfishness of materialism through the *milieu* in which sacrifice had traditionally been at home.

The Navy was as badly treated as the Army. Suffice it to recall that its chief was the journalist Pelletan, a man whose name is synonymous with reckless levity, and who appeared during the too long tenure of his office as the worthy compeer of General André. He had been famous for starting and organising strikes, and it was under his government that the Arsenal workers, semi-military as they were, developed the unruliness for which they became celebrated. M. Pelletan had also ideas of his own concerning the composition of the fleet: their chief result was the passage of the naval power of France from the second rank to the fourth. He did not believe more than General André in the possibility of a war, and the navy magazines were as empty as those of the army. In 1913, the deputy André Lefèvre, once a Socialist but a true patriot, proved to the Chamber that at the end of 1905 there was only ammunition enough for each French gun to shoot seven hundred times. One of the few frontier towns supposed to defend the Ardennes gap—the little town of Avesnes which the present writer happens to know well—was so destitute

of stores of all kinds that it took four months and a half of strenuous efforts to replenish its magazines.

The army during the nightmare of those years was not looked upon as the defender of France that all the national energies ought to strengthen, but as the antagonist of civic society, a champion of belated prejudices and the enemy of justice, and it was treated accordingly.

16. *Combism and Patriotism.*

The old patriotic notion which identified the country not only with its traditions but with its territorial limits; the pleasure which the student of the history of France used to take in her gradual expansion in the course of ages; the accent in which true patriots would, like Louis XIV, utter her name, as if it were that of a sacred spiritual being —all this had been many times ridiculed as limited and almost barbarous. Voltaire in the string of questions which he entitled *les Pourquoi* asked two or three questions which sound like anti-patriotism long before the anti-patriots, and the early Socialists of course placed themselves above such hampering notions. I have explained in a previous chapter how the philosophy of Taine and Renan in the first part of their lives implied a standpoint irreconcilable with patriotism. But the cynical expression of disdain for the attachment to one's country was not to be heard until the last years of the nine-

teenth century when it became a sort of elegance. In 1891, in the earliest issues of the *Mercure de France*, the loyalty to Alsace-Lorraine was derided or inveighed against. Jules Renard wrote that in a short time the war of 1870 would be considered of less importance than the appearance of the *Cid*, or even of a fable of La Fontaine.

M. Hérold said: "If one were sincere, the confession would be general that the treaty of Frankfort is as remote as that of Utrecht." The well-known M. Rémy de Gourmont was more direct, and said that the farce of the two sister provinces kneeling at the frontier-post had lasted long enough to be unbearable. M. Bazalgette said coldly that every cultivated man ought to view calmly the idea of seeing his own country absorbed by another.

Such utterances were, it is true, sporadic, and might frequently be construed as literary exaggerations which it was uncritical to take literally. But a speech which had also been printed by the *Mercure de France* must be regarded as formulating a deep and widely spread feeling, for it was admirably in keeping with the haughty intellectualism which ran high at the end of the nineteenth century. "I only recognise the value of intelligence," it said; "it knows no frontiers, and I would fain sacrifice the lives of a hundred French fools to that of one intelligent man from anywhere. The vaunted integrity of the national soil is no

concern of mine; the little nook where I meditate is enough for me, and the territory around it may well be conquered, it will leave my thought exactly what it was."

In 1904 all this had gradually become familiar. The Sorbonne was entirely devoted to the scientific methods of Germany, and the reaction produced by this wholesale adoption of literary principles not native was certainly weakening for patriotism. It seems almost incredible that a professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure—a Jew, it is true—M. Frédéric Rauh, should have conducted a scientific investigation with his pupils into the question: "Was patriotism a rational feeling, and did it bear the test of psychological analysis?" This inquiry resulted in an almost universal negative. The expression of patriotism was rejected as mere verbalism, and the sentiment itself was declared to be a superstition, or at best an artistic or literary fallacy. "Patriots," M. Rauh said, "do not count; they are purely sentimental. Their doctrine is in flat contradiction with mine, and I would much rather defend internationalism." Yet, the professor saw that this conclusion was practically untenable, and introducing a distinction into it he declared that to stave off major evils a man might obey the military law, no matter how unjust. Besides, a country like France being the apostle of Internationalism, one could reasonably wish and work for its continuation lest the doctrine of Inter-

nationalism itself should suffer from its absorption into less philosophical empires.

There were no protests at the time, not even from the students, hundreds of whom must have heard of this doctrine while week after week it was publicly discussed. The Sorbonne of those days was a hotbed of the most uncompromising Dreyfusism. Professors like M. Seignobos, M. Langlois, M. Andler, and above all M. Monod were so Germanised in their thoughts and teaching that it was difficult for their hearers to get at what might be left of sentiment under their scientific principles, and Germany acted once more as the magnet it had been towards the middle of the nineteenth century.

It is needless to say that the Combes government took special pleasure in showing itself above aged prejudices. The presence in the cabinet of M. Delcassé, whom all Europe, except France, knew to be planning the isolation of Germany, would occasionally elicit criticism from the very sensitive German press, but M. Delcassé was nothing to M. Jaurès, and the latter gave complete satisfaction to the enemies of his country. Whenever there was the least cause of friction between the two governments he was seen in the tribune, explaining warmly that the fault was entirely with the French Foreign Office. He spoke in German at German congresses, constantly referred to the point of view of the German "comrades," and

certainly was more popular on the other side of the Rhine than even Bebel, who was only appreciated by his party. I said before that on several occasions the *Internationale* was sung at official ceremonies instead of the *Marseillaise*, and the Prime Minister did not protest against the presence of the Socialist red flag.

The favour of the Ministers of Education went to the teaching recommended by M. Jaurès and his friends. It was scientific; that is to say, atheistic under cover of the other epithet; and rational, that is to say, frankly anti-patriotic. The history of France until 1789 was ignored. French children under the pretence that they ought not to have their memories crowded with bloody battles, useless dates, and dry treaties, knew nothing of the epic of their country. But they were carefully informed of all the details in the history of the Revolution and its consequences, that would make them realise how nations are less antagonistic to one another than classes. Jeanne d'Arc was left out as a barbarous warrior, but the Communists were extolled.

Nothing can show so much both the hold which internationalist doctrines had taken of distinguished intellects and their popularity than the success which, as late as 1907—two years after the fall of Combes—welcomed the famous book of M. Anatole France, *l'Ile des Pingouins*. This was a caricature of the history of France conceived in the coarsest materialistic point of view of the

Socialists, but drawn in the vein now of Rabelais and now of Voltaire, and deceiving the unguarded reader about its essential vulgarity by its cleverness. That a writer of M. France's distinction should have taken such a subject and handled it as if he had dealt with the Papimanes, showed to what extent the certitude of peace, the cosmic point of view, and the disdain of sentimental superstitions had transformed the country not only of Jeanne d'Arc but of the Revolutionary volunteers of 1792, and even of Michelet, humanitarian as he was.

17. *Combism and National Culture.*

The catastrophe of 1870, and the diminished political influence which followed it, had left untouched the spiritual Empire of France, *i.e.* the radiating intelligence for which she had been famous since the days of Brunetto Latini. It belonged to the destructive spirit of M. Combes' government to bring even that into jeopardy.

It is true that the classical culture on which French literature was built in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries had been weakened long before the advent of M. Combes and his Socialists, but it had been through imprudent zeal, not through enmity. Latin, and especially Greek had gradually seemed austere to modern generations rendered anæmic by the newspaper and the

novel, and an attempt had been made to teach them through pleasant easy methods. It was not necessary, the reformers argued, to take all the trouble necessary for learning how to speak or even write the classical languages: it was enough if one could read their best monuments. Consequently composition in Greek prose and verse, and translations into the same language, were discarded, and in a decade or two the very estimable school of French Hellenists which had risen between the restoration of Greek studies—towards 1810—and 1850 was left where it was, and mostly employed in preparing a vast collection of cribs which the next generation was to use in default of personal knowledge. Latin was not treated in the same manner: verses and compositions were kept up until about 1880, but the same reasoning was applied to it, and the same results followed. French professors in those days were seldom travelled men, and seldom knew anything of modern languages. So personal experience could not teach them what a thorough study of the classic tongues had taught their elders, viz. that no language is ever mastered unless one aims at possessing it like a native. The consequence was that the ancient texts were taught and remembered like difficult music, which, the moment the boy was released from school, vanished from his memory. The idea that one was *learning* the classical lan-

guages disappeared and was replaced by that of being exercised in them, a nuance which school slang admirably expresses in the familiar phrases : *faire du Latin, faire du Grec.* On the whole few people, except specialists, knew Latin well, and hardly anybody had more than the poorest smattering of Greek. Gradually pupils came to doubt the knowledge of their masters, the conclusion that if nobody knew them it was because they were impossible to master became general if seldom positively stated, and boys, parents, and even masters had an uncomfortable feeling that six or seven years were wasted over things which nobody could honestly say he had succeeded in learning.

So at last the reproach of uselessness and—less definitely—that of being demoralising were made against what was called the traditional teaching, which in fact was nothing more than the mistake of one or two generations, when the great commercial and industrial expansion universal in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century became noticeable in France. Immediately over-logical intellects and people endowed with the superficial common sense which is the modern form of wisdom, declared that young Frenchmen were unprepared for this kind of opportunity. They had no scientific preparation, and they did not know modern languages : all their education had to be made over again, and while they did this

luckier competitors forestalled them everywhere. This was the time when M. Demolins published *La Superiorité des Anglo-Saxons*, and when M. Jules Lemaître, untrue to himself, threw the classical education overboard without ceremony.

It was a singular oversight to forget that the French of the eighteenth century, trained exclusively in the classics, had been remarkable colonisers and successful merchants. It was even more inexplicable that French writers should complain of lack of scientific preparation in a city possessing those two unrivalled schools of engineers: the *Ecole Polytechnique* and the *Ecole Centrale*. They did not see that if, in spite of the comparative neglect of scientific formation in educational methods, the French easily became successful merchants and good engineers, it must be because their culture—whatever it might be—at all events prepared them for specialisation. This all-important consideration was overlooked, and people began to cry for a more practical *syllabus* in schools.

However, there was no treason in this, and the rights of a superior culture were carefully reserved even by the most strenuous advocates of utilitarian education. It was in a very different spirit that the Socialist politicians, unexpectedly abetted by so-called intellectual democrats at the Sorbonne, took in hand what they naturally called the truly republican reform of education.

In reality this would-be reform was nothing else than an envious insurrection of the lower tendencies of the democracy against culture pure and simple. The Socialists and Radicals were the representatives of classes which could not aspire to the education so far identified with the classics, and they contended that as everybody could not be given such an education, it should not be given to anyone. Through all the campaign which they made against classical education, one could follow this strange principle in all its crudeness. The effort of past generations had been towards making people equal by raising the lower ranks; it was to this policy that we owed men like Amyot, Rollin, or Diderot, not to speak of more than one, J. J. Weiss, in recent times. But the notion of mere anarchists could not but be different and even contrary; order seemed more difficult than levelling, and levelling in consequence became the object. It is only fair to say that M. Jaurès, who was a scholar, did not share these views, but he was the kind of chief who follows his adherents, and his influence availed little in this instance.

There was surprise at the reviving of an old argument, which could only pass as an argument at an exceptionally stupid epoch. "The official representatives of the new education," wrote a Sorbonne professor, "have long maintained that Latin ought to be ostracised, and that its banish-

ment must be the work of the Republic. There is between the Latin tongue and the Church too intimate a bond—in fact, a sort of filial relation. The Humanities viewed as they were in the old school, and old-fashioned in their very object and method, are nothing else than the course of studies which the Jesuits once freed from scholasticism for the use of society people. In fact, modern education is only the last word of secularisation." This Sorbonne professor was no other than M. Ferdinand Brunot, a grammarian and lexicographer of world-wide repute, and it must have taken all the bigotry of the time to blind such a man to the sordidness of the thought he defended.

But the Sorbonne, with the exception of M. Faguet and a few others, was beneath its traditional rôle in this emergency. Most of its professors were silent, or if they spoke up it was for the new fad. M. Lanson was among the first who viewed the institution in which he taught, not as an instrument of culture but as a place for the production of positive erudition. He spoke of his class as a scientific *atelier*, in which young men worked under his guidance for results similar to those obtained at the German universities. Most of the professors of history did the same, and the word *seminar* was used by them in its German sense. A lad fresh from school, and only beginning to learn how to learn, would be started on researches the final out-

come of which was little better than a catalogue, useful no doubt for more advanced scholars who might need its information, but certainly not so useful for its author, only the year before a mere schoolboy, with the schoolboy's incredible gaps and crudeness.

Little by little the new theories, the new spirit, and the new hatreds passed into legislation. In 1902 the old course of studies was replaced by a completely different one, the chief feature of which was a quadruple subdivision making Latin and Greek optional, while sciences and modern languages never were, and enabling a boy to become a *bachelier*, even if he had never been inside a *lycée*, and only knew the tuition given in the higher schools of the elementary degree. This was levelling without any shame, and the measure was only well received where jealousy is a principle. Shortly after a reform of the *licence*—the degree generally taken after two years at a University and qualifying its possessor for teaching—made it possible for a young man to become a professor of history or philosophy not only without any knowledge of Latin or Greek, but even without having ever been properly tested in French composition. This was the new culture. Almost at the same time the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* was modified to an extent amounting to suppression. It had been a famous, one may say a unique, seminary of

the most refined culture, but that was exactly what drew upon it the animadversion of people impatient of any kind of distinction. There ought to be no *élite* in a democracy.

This was the work of Combism with regard to education. All the outcry for light, all the promise of an intellectual training for the children of the democracy resulted in destruction and in the monotony of inferiority. In two or three years the practical results of this equalising appeared, and they were deplorable: young men trained after the new methods might know a little more than their elders, but they were unprepared in a woeful degree for learning higher things, and often discouraged their chief or employers by the un-French slowness of their minds in seeing the logical concatenation of ideas. Strange to relate, the protest, which had not come from Sorbonne professors, came promptly enough from scientists, physicians or engineers, and, as we shall see, was more productive of effects than awkward explanations given by professionals.

18. *The Blindness of Combism.*

The spirit which the science, philosophy, and literature of the Second Empire had elaborated for a dangerous *élite* was let loose by the Third Republic, and ranged freely through the country,

while selfish and inadequate Parliaments engrossed by their petty interests forgot that patriotism means attention to the position of one's country as influenced by that of its neighbours. What the Republicans did from levity until 1898, the Dreyfusists and Combists did out of perverseness during the seven years that followed. They pushed the revolutionary principles to their utmost consequences and revelled in the destruction they witnessed. The humiliation of magistrates, the persecution of officers, the banishment of priests and nuns, all this acted upon them as it might on the crudest village politician. It satisfied their hatred, and their intelligence cared little whether it had not terrible effects upon the country.

In 1904 M. Combes fell under the weight of universal contempt. The revelations concerning the espionage in the army had sickened even the least squeamish, and there was general relief when, in 1904, M. Clemenceau literally kicked the Premier out of office in the most disdainful article he had ever written. But the loss of their servant or valet produced little effect upon the Socialists and Radicals. They went on doing, under M. Rouvier, the work they had undertaken five years before. At the beginning of 1905 they were immersed in the joy of preparing the final defeat of the Church by the Separation Law, and they did not give a thought to the state of affairs beyond the frontiers. Never

had the belief in the fraternity of Nations been more general. M. Jaurès, who was only a ranter of course, believed in it, but M. Léon Bourgeois, whom Europe regarded for fifteen years as a man of rare intelligence, believed in it too. Nobody remembered that individuals had duties, but the duties of peoples were the subject of endless philosophising with men so ignorant of history as not to know that nations always see their duty in their immediate interest. The realities of European politics were limited with most politicians to the system of agreements patiently knit by M. Delcassé, and this view was perhaps a worse delusion than plain humanitarianism. France wanted no war, of course, they said to themselves, seeing that every year she decreased her military expenditure; and no nation, however unreasonably inimical, could dream of making war against her with such a protecting chain of alliances or amities round her frontiers. There was therefore no cause for anxiety, and France had only to go on minding her own particular mission, which was to look after the interests of mankind.

Meanwhile M. Delcassé carried on his effort, patriotic indeed, but in a less egotistical person an effort likely to be accompanied with tremors. While everybody else was speaking of peace, while the Ministers of War and of the Navy proceeded with the disarmament, M. Delcassé was preparing

war, and he knew it; and he knew that Germany knew it. While politicians disclaimed every Imperial ambition, there was a French army on the frontier of Morocco which meant nothing if it was not territorial expansion, and Germany followed the progress of this army with increasing jealousy.

One man, indeed, the new Premier, M. Rouvier, a financier with the financier's rather near-sighted judgment, partly realised the state of affairs. He was early informed that M. Delcassé's plans could only result in trouble, but he thought the situation might be made less dangerous by quietly dealing with it, by giving assurances to the German ambassador and possibly to the German financiers. It never occurred to him that the real solution was to warn France, or at least the Parliament, of their danger. He could easily have done it The year before one of the best staff officers in the army, General de Négrier, had sent in his resignation because, as he put it, "the Eastern frontier was supposed to be protected, and in reality was not." It belonged to the head of government to bring home to the Chamber the truth which this frank declaration of a true soldier held in so concise a form. The effect no doubt would have been immediate. But M. Rouvier would rather leave the Chamber to its enjoyment of the famous Article 4 in the Separation Law, and the country to its ignorances or passions. At all events the crisis came like a

thunderbolt. On the last day of March 1905 the Kaiser unexpectedly landed at Tangier, and delivered a speech in which he declared that the Sultan of Morocco was in his eyes an independent sovereign, and Morocco a country open to all nations without any monopoly or annexation. "My visit," the monarch added, "is the recognition of this independence."

The weeks that followed were the most eventful in the history of the Third Republic. The Kaiser emphasized the meaning of the Tangier demonstration by coming to Metz for the inauguration of a monument. A French mission, consisting of exceptionally distinguished officers, having been sent to Berlin on the occasion of the Kronprinz' marriage, the welcome which was given to these officers showed an obvious intention of discriminating between them and their mission. Threats were in the air.

It was then that the historical dispatch sent by the English Foreign Office to the French government introduced into the situation a new element the importance of which could not be exaggerated. "The English government," this document simply said, was ready to examine "the basis of an agreement likely to protect the mutual interests of England and France in case they should be endangered."

This telegram, through some mysterious indis-

cretion, was known at Berlin the day after its receipt, and immediately the tone of the German papers rose to anger. They openly said that France must be the hostage of England; let any threatening move on the part of the English fleet be made in the direction of the Baltic, and a German army should immediately be sent to Nancy. Some people have said that M. Delcassé was for mobilising at once. But this was the impulse of a man who, having done his best, had omitted to ascertain whether his neighbours were also doing their duty. A war in the then condition of France, with the magazines empty, the army demoralised by the Dreyfusist persecution, and the country divided and taken aback, was an impossible absurdity. M. Delcassé was made to understand it. On June 6, 1905, the news of his resignation appeared in the papers, and it was soon rumoured that the removal of the man, who for seven years had been the representative of France before Europe, was the sacrifice demanded by Germany in a tone which left only one alternative.

This, then, was the result of thirty-five years of a *régime* which had been supposed to have for its constant object to wash away the memory of 1870. An "unprecedented humiliation," as M. Clemenceau, then Prime Minister, called it four years later in the Chamber—forced upon the least attentive the deterioration which France, slowly

at first, with awful rapidity since 1898, had undergone. Under pretence of being modern, civilised, and philosophical, the leaders of the country had enervated and blinded it; under pretence of being for peace they had made it incapable of protecting by arms the record of its historical honour.

Everybody felt that this degradation ought not to be charged on France. In the minds of all observers here and abroad the people responsible for it were the semi-anonymous crew to which I have just referred and the history of which has almost filled this book so far. *They*, as common parlance almost invariably designates them, were the criminals. And they were not so much criminals as they were vulgarians with inferior morals and an inferior intelligence. The mistake of the good men who pieced together the Constitutional laws of 1875 had made their deplorable rule possible. It was inevitable that an Assembly of unguided democrats should think of its own shabby interests, and that such an assembly, enjoying a practically unbalanced power, should make a dangerous use of it. Being individualistic, that is to say selfish, they could only act selfishly and diffuse selfishness and the stupidity of selfishness about them. Let them, with such a disposition, attempt or suffer one of them to attempt a rôle in the intricate politics of the world, and the ridiculous impossibility of being wise, strong, and persevering beyond the frontiers

while being the very reverse at home was sure to appear, at the risk of tragic consequences. The lesson of the history of the Third Republic is nothing else than the trite lesson of all history, viz. that nothing matters so much to a country as a good government.

PART II

THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT

SECTION I.—IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TANGIER INCIDENT

SECTION II.—INTELLECTUAL PREPARATION OF THE NEW SPIRIT

SECTION III.—EVIDENCES OF THE NEW SPIRIT

(*a*) Instinctive Manifestations of the New Spirit

(*b*) More Conscious Manifestations of the New Spirit

INTRODUCTORY

THE Tangier affair was a flash of lightning, after which the clouds lifted. It was one of those events which rapidly destroy a whole system of thought, or, at any rate, throw into the shade the protagonists who only a short time before seemed alone to hold the field, meanwhile liberating another system until then unnoticed or disregarded. What has been called the regeneration or even the resurrection of France dated from that shock.

The admixture of materialism, veiled cowardice, and self-delusion which had caused the deterioration of the public spirit, and emphasized the political losses of France, suddenly appeared in its ugliness; a silence followed; and when it was broken, the men who had been the oracles of the people for two generations found they had lost this position; they felt that all they could do was to let some of them sneer and scoff, but they were unable to prevent better men than themselves—the *élite* of the country, in fact—from speaking thoughts which either the catastrophe of 1870, or the excesses of

thought, speech, and misrule since then committed had planted and ripened in them.

So it turned out that while the fear of being conquered—rather than the fear of going to war —caused in the less reflective portion of the nation the reaction of surprise, anger, and gradually determination natural to a courageous people, the thinkers who had a right to the intellectual leadership of their fellow-countrymen had an unexpected opportunity for making themselves heard. And when they did speak, or when popular exponents began to retail their ideas, these were found to be nothing more nor less than the long-forgotten ancestral wisdom. One may say without any fear of contradiction that French voices had not sounded so French since the troubled times of the sixteenth century.

Politicians may take advantage of a bad constitution to come back to the charge, as they have done several times already, they may even secure power and use it against their own country, but nothing can undo what has been done after Tangier in 1905 and again after Agadir in 1911. French ideas are in the air, at present, instead of internationalist doctrines, and the name of France, which the governments immediately preceding the Tangier affair were ashamed to utter in the accents of patriotism, is now constantly on the lips even of the Socialist deputy

and the Syndicalist workman. This much is a positive gain: the reintegration of France as a directing idea of the French nation after the long intellectual wandering of the nineteenth century cannot be a transient phenomenon.

The following chapters will be an *exposé* of the fortunate consequences of the Tangier incident, and of the national spirit to which it gave birth, both among the simple and among those more capable of rational consciousness.

SECTION I

IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TANGIER INCIDENT

1. *The Lifting up of the Veil.*

It is a favourite theory that the French generally act in what Julius Cæsar calls the *tumultus* of their ancestors, the Gauls. As a matter of fact, their history is more one of upheavals than one of even progress. Yet it is also a fact that they are apt to play a long time with ideas before making up their minds about them, and that when politics are placed between ideas and their intellectual vision they are slower than many other peoples to see where their interest immediately lies. This may account for the fact that although the Tangier incident came as a shock and its illumination was sudden, it was not accompanied by any panic. The country, it must be said, had very different interests from those in which it has been absorbed since: it cared little for the Moroccan conquest, about which neither the Foreign Minister nor the Press would enlighten it; and, on the contrary, it followed the debates

on the Separation Law with passionate curiosity. So when the papers narrated the arrival of the Kaiser's ship off Tangier, and gave the text of his address after landing, people were slow to understand. First of all, it had been settled once for all during the preceding years that the world was now too civilised to harbour the idea of a war, and such a comfortable notion is one which survives its causes as the optimism of the gambler, and even the hopeful sensation he had before being undone, survive his ruin. Then, few people realised that Tangier and inaccessible Fez and the rocky valleys of Morocco were of any interest to France, so that the significance of the Emperor's step was almost lost upon them. It was only when the papers began to say that M. Rouvier, the Prime Minister, had constant conferences with the German Ambassador, and, above all, when M. Delcassé vanished from the Cabinet at a few hours' notice, that the name War appeared in lurid letters upon the horizon.

Then the veil was indeed lifted up, and the French had a clear view of the situation. The universal feeling was the consciousness of an immense absurdity. Pacifism had been a ridiculous farce. Because modern people, too nervous to think of blood, had chosen to think of commerce and money instead, because a few dozen Socialists in France and Germany had bragged

that no fratricidal duel would henceforward be suffered where they had their word to say; because M. Léon Bourgeois had been admired at a Congress of the Peace, and M. d'Estournelles de Constant meditated writing a crushing letter to the first monarch who should call his people to the flag, war had been regarded as an impossibility. But war at present was near at hand all the same. It mattered little that France had not wished for it, never given a thought to it—there it was. One ship, half pleasure-boat, half ironclad, one man in a helmet not only meant it, but also meant the preposterousness of planning any resistance. Behind the yacht there were scores of men-of-war built in a few years' time, according to a single plan carried out by the same men, and provided with every modern improvement; behind the Monarch in a helmet there were all the German nations, with their unique military training, their millions of men, and their formidable armament. How childishly foolish the anti-militarist doctrines appeared! what a lout seemed the country doctor, Combes, with his belief in Jaurès and the peasanty craft which he could only use in jockeying combinations! what puppets General André and the journalist Admiral Pelletan must have been! If the French arsenals were empty, if the French officers were demoralised by espionage and petty molesta-

tions; if the army had been persuaded that it had every object except war, it was because those extraordinary leaders had been taken in by shallow paradoxes of which many a plain farmer glancing at the newspaper had seen at once the futility.

Syndicalism had long been a bugbear, and, as is too often the case with frightening objects, it had been regarded as an unavoidable development. Now, in the feeling of universal disillusionment which gained the workman as well as the *bourgeois*, it became merely irritating. During two or three years, as we shall see, Syndicalism was to prove to the world that it might checkmate the Chamber itself, but even this would not restore its formidable magnetism. It would only be another evidence of the essential weakness of the Chamber.

As to the religious quarrels over which so much time and energy, so much that might have been useful to all the commonwealth, had been wasted, they appeared in their true light, as academic disputes which the stupid hatred of the anti-clericals had embittered to the point of making one of the parties forget every idea of justice.

On the whole, a few months after the Tangier affair there were not many Frenchmen whose outlook had not been deeply modified. To most

of them it had been brought home that every individual, whether he likes it or not, is tied by vital bonds, not to abstractions, but to a territory, and that indifference to the fortunes of this territory is unnatural and foolish, and must sooner or later be paid for by humiliation or anxiety.

2. *Awakening of the Instinct of Self-Preservation.*

The success of the Republicans in the decisive election of 1876 had for its principal cause a vague but universal feeling which acted powerfully upon the electorate. This was the hope that the new *régime* might make of the welfare of the community the concern of all the citizens. The wish to be an active element in society, to be more than a mere looker-on, not to seem to presume by taking a positive interest in the affairs of one's country, and to help in promoting their proper settlement is the pathetic side of the democracies; it is also their chief motive power.

The failure of the Third Republic to do more than artificially keep up this feeling must be one of the chief grievances of the social historian against it. This *bourgeois* democracy will always be regarded as a fraud. From the very first—that is to say; from the moment the constitution of 1875 gave them an easy means of exploiting

their compatriots, these unscrupulous people duped them. They went on repeating to them at each election that they were the real masters of their destinies, but taking every precaution lest the so-called masters should have a single clear issue placed before them on which they could pronounce. The effect of this policy was certain. The electors, interested at first, became gradually indifferent to politics which they not only did not sway, but hardly ever understood, and settled into the apathy which has been the characteristic of the Third Republic. So that the only people who were attentive to the public affairs were for years the very wide-awake politicians in the Chamber from selfish motives, and later on that section of the working classes which came to consciousness through Syndicalist propagandism. In the main, the chief object the nation had had in welcoming the Republic thus appeared nullified.

What the development of the Republican institutions had not done, the Tangier incident did in a few weeks. Once more the French recovered that freshness of citizenship, that unanimity of feeling and purpose which have impelled them to action at all the great moments of their history: the Communist movement, the Crusades, the Revolution, the great wars of 1792, and the first wars of the Empire.

The threats of Germany might indeed have been traced to causes which ought to leave the lower classes indifferent: the dissatisfaction of a few bankers or shipowners, the Imperialist ambitions of some university professors, the jingoism of the Prussian officers, &c.; but these considerations, if they were put forward, could not outweigh the natural impulse of patriotism in its most elemental form, self-preservation. From high to low the French felt that they were threatened with a foreign domination, and the most unbearable foreign domination they could imagine; it was enough to revive in them the passionate interest in their State which used to possess their ancestors, and to give them the ennobling consciousness of participating in its defence, if not in its government. In truth, it is on the memory of those moments that France has lived ever since, and her fountain of new energy rose when she realised the significance of the Kaiser's demonstration in Morocco.

After Tangier the feeling gave birth to a feverish desire for being ready soon, whatever the cost might be; after Agadir—that is to say, six years later—circumstances having changed, the army being in perfect training, the arsenals full, and the French artillery showing a decided superiority over that of Germany, the reaction was even more resolute. For the first time since

the brilliant and imprudent days of the Second Empire, the whole French nation waited impatiently for a declaration of war. The suspense lasted only a fortnight, but it had been the suspense of courage and wounded pride, and no longer that of nervous incertitude, and after that fortnight the French were not the same. Not only the vague formulæ clothing vaguer hopes with which they had been amused so long were forgotten, but the ghost of 1870—that slowly-growing fear of Germany which materialism in the guise of Pacifism had increased—had been laid at last. I know that a sentimental *impetus* is only too quickly spent, and I have seen people imagine that this one would be like every other. But the events have shown that there must have been in the Tangier and Agadir commotions something that was of another, higher, and more endurable order. The French may be as indifferent to mere politics as they were beforehand, but their attitude the moment a truly patriotic interest is at stake proves that they have regained their fullness of civic consciousness on a few vital points. The way in which the immense majority of the nation welcomed the Three Year Law and the financial measures attending it had the calmness accompanying a rational operation, and not the excitement inherent in purely instinctive impulses.

3. *Revival of the Military Spirit.*

It is almost a tautology to say that the feeling of self-preservation promptly gave rise to a revival of the military spirit. All the effort of the French since 1905 has had the army for its object. And the common good sense of the people did not beat about the bush for the means of defending France at a minimum of sacrifice: it went straight to the only practical method. Those were the days when Jaurès, in endless speeches and writings, would explain that the best army was not an army at all, but the whole nation in arms on any menace against its independence. So-called serious people, inured to absurdities by the ocean of paradoxes on which France had drifted since 1899, lent the new general an attentive ear, but they gazed in severe doubtfulness at the real soldiers who took the trouble to explain that all these fine theories were not theories at all, but dreams which might only look well in Michelet's or Victor Hugo's pages: soldiers were under a ban and supposed to know less than anybody else about everything, including tactics.

The bulk of the nation were not long in scouting this moonshine. An army was a military concern, and civilians knew nothing about it: the more military it was, the better. The east-

ern frontier ought to be protected at all times by a thick line of regiments ready to march, and the defence of that most important approach was not, on any account, to depend on the uncertain arrival of reserves. Garrison towns like Toul, Lunéville, Verdun, and the lonely forts in their vicinity,—places the very names of which used to sound disagreeably in the ears of the recruits,—became in great demand.[1] The yearly manœuvres, which reservists had formerly been glad to shirk, were accepted as treats. The officers who commanded those of 1905 are unanimous in their statements that the men were as different from themselves as if twenty years had intervened: the proportion of reservists on the sick list was wonderfully small. The technical conclusions of the Manchurian war had just begun to be widely circulated, and it seemed as if the soldiers were as ready to understand them as their officers: they could be summed up in the superiority of offensive over defensive tactics, and in the necessity of giving the men habits of decision and initiative. Nothing, of course, would be better in keeping with the military tradition of the French, and the principles at which officers

[1] The present writer knew personally a lad of twenty, a poor college servant, who insisted on undergoing an operation, lest he should not serve his time, and applied for one of the Lorraine garrison towns instead of staying in or near Paris, as he could easily have done.

arrived were acted upon immediately. Many observers must have been surprised at noticing the change in the men's impressions concerning their officers. They used to be confined to trivial or merely funny remarks about their personal disposition and its effects upon daily barracks life. Now the soldiers would discuss their chiefs entirely from the professional point of view, and in most cases their appreciations applied wonderfully to the military—not parade-ground—value of the officers. Once more the army was what it purports to be on the first line of the booklet known as the *Théorie Militaire*, viz. a school for war, and not, as the Dreyfusists would have had it, for peace.

It is remarkable, also, that the development of aviation, which almost coincided with this change, was never regarded from the scientific or sportsman's point of view, but was viewed through its military possibilities. The naïve statements of Védrines—possibly the best representative of his craft—which caused so much sympathetic amusement in England, corresponded to a universal feeling.

Meanwhile the success of General d'Amade and General Lyautey in Morocco effaced what traces of ill-will against staff officers might have been left after the Dreyfus affair. Both were typical French soldiers: brave, dashing, and

brilliant, persevering, flexible, and good-humoured, but, above all, intelligent, making the most of every opportunity—in their own interest, no doubt, for they are ambitious, but, above all, for the success of their mission. These are qualities which will always win popularity in France. It was in vain that Jaurès and his party cried out against the folly of colonial enterprises, and proved with long columns of figures that the Moroccan campaign cost enormous sums of money which might have been better employed elsewhere; the country, as a rule so sensitive to arguments of this kind, hardly listened. The general feeling, which went on gathering strength as the years passed, was evidently that France is rich enough to pay for her glory.

Gradually the army, which had been almost compelled to hide itself, and seemed to be merely on sufferance in a country which had outrun every other in anti-militarist so-called civilisation, was pushed again to the forefront, and when one of its most popular manifestations, the "retreat," or Saturday night patrolling with the bands, was revived, it was nothing short of a triumph.

But nothing can give a better idea of the return of France to her traditional military spirit than the changed tone of the politicians when they speak of the army. General André, during the long four years in which he was Minister of

War, would warm over the "nation in arms," but he always spoke of officers in a tone unpleasantly near the apologetical. It was obvious that he thought them benighted, and felt more inclined to criticise than to defend them. His immediate successor, M. Berteaux, a broker, a busybody, and a politician with some of the politician's worst faults, but with keen receptivities and a conceit which occasionally would look like proper pride, felt the change in the country. The present writer can remember him in the Chamber, shortly after the Tangier affair, standing in his bench and threatening with violent gestures his own political friends who had made insulting allusions to the army. M. Messimy, advanced as he was, and with the initial disadvantage of having left the army for politics, appeared much more military in office than might have been expected. As to M. Millerand, his character being equal to his intelligence, he not only freed the army from the wretched trammels which Dreyfusism had put upon it, but treated it with a respect which could not but be contagious. The politicians who resented such respect were, however, compelled to copy it, and to-day even the worst ungentlemanliness in the Chamber seems decidedly cured of the tone it complacently affected about 1903. The division between France and the French army is a thing of the past.

4. *The Chamber Dethroned.*

During the whole of its history the French Chamber was only popular once: that was after May 16th, 1877, when three hundred and sixty-three deputies rose against President MacMahon and, right or wrong, embodied for a while the feeling of the majority in the nation. The Chamber had only been a year in existence then and was as full of promises as the Republican *régime* itself. After that date it never once succeeded again in securing the national sympathy, and more than once it drew the national contempt on its head.

However, the sentiment into which the country gradually settled after a long and disappointing experience of Parliamentary government was chiefly one of profound indifference. The deputies were the rulers of the country; that was a matter of course: how they ruled it did not concern one Frenchman in twenty.

After 1905, not only the Tangier affair, but a series of occurrences modified that feeling. For thirty years the Chamber had treated the short-lived Cabinets which it made and unmade as if fully conscious of their inferiority. On no occasion had it been compelled to appeal to anybody, or even trust anybody. The Tangier inci-

dent made the deputies feel, and, for the first time really appear, not only defeated but bewildered. They tried, indeed, to lay the blame of their shame on M. Delcassé, but the Cabinet in which M. Delcassé had served had been too submissively their obedient agent, and no one would believe that men so haughty the day before were not responsible for their actions. Meanwhile the attention of the whole country and of Europe itself became centred on one man, M. Rouvier, and as the negotiations between France and Germany were carried on for the first time not only at the Foreign Office or at the German Embassy, but through semi-official statements in the Press of both countries, the Chamber suddenly receded into the background. and assumed the humble part of the looker-on. It was a great falling off, and, strange to say, nobody seemed to notice it otherwise than with satisfaction.

In the years which followed, the Chamber had the ill-luck to be seen repeatedly in the same predicament. It did not even attempt to deal with the vinegrowers' disturbances in the south of France, and once more the country saw its interests placed in the hands of one individual, who this time was the wily Clemenceau. It was as passive when a new power, another Parliament, with chiefs and a discipline, the Syndicalist Labour Bourse, suddenly rose against it and

fairly had it at bay on two occasions. Nobody who lived in Paris at the time will ever forget the electricians' and above all the postmen's strikes. There was considerable discomfort in the city, and after a time there was a certain amount of impatience which never bore the semblance of a panic; but through it all there was a sly enjoyment of the embarrassment in which the deputies found themselves, and whoever met some of them at the time must have seen that they realised it with some confusion. This was emphasized during the postmen's strike by the treatment which M. Buisson and a few other Radical-Socialist deputies received at a meeting of the strikers. They were hooted off the platform where they had taken their seats uninvited, and that was the first open manifestation of the breach between the *bourgeois* Socialism and earnest Syndicalism. The strike of the Northern Railway-men gave rise to a similar situation, the Chamber appearing helpless and hardly attempting to disguise its annoyance under pointless speeches, while M. Briand, then Minister of the Interior, was practically left to adjust the difficulty alone.

Such experiences cannot be repeated at short intervals without effect. The gradual displacing of the basis of authority from the Chamber to the Prime Ministers, which I will point out in the next chapter, dates from those days.

But with effacement came an increased contempt when the deputies, apparently satisfied to have taken a back seat, made up for the humiliation by tangible advantages they craftily secured for themselves. They certainly obeyed unwise suggestions when they—unknown to the country and on one occasion profiting by the absence of most of the minority—voted for themselves, first a handsome old-age pension, and later on an increase of two-thirds of their salary. The nickname Quinze Mille—their salary now being, in fact, fifteen thousand francs—sticks much more unpleasantly upon them than even the memory of the Panama corruption. The elector never became reconciled to the notion that while his own taxes rose the salary of his deputies should rise too. Even a reform like Proportional Representation, which at other times would have appeared eminently moral, did not succeed in impressing people with the disinterestedness of the Chamber. The only conclusion which the country thought safe was that deputies could not very well resist an impulse stronger than their own.

5. *The Craving for Strong Men.*

After the General Election of May 1914, M. Jaurès declared triumphantly that France had shown once more her antipathy for personal

power. He added that if the logic of the election were pressed to its consequences, as it ought to be, the Presidency of the Republic should be abolished. The Socialist leader was partly right, undoubtedly. If the logic, not of an election, but of the interpretation by successive Parliaments of the Constitution were pressed to its consequences, the Presidency would appear an expensive and confusing superfluity. The present volume is nothing else than the recognition of this fact. But while M. Jaurès objected to any initiative on the part of the President, I deplore the fact that the person who so far appeared the most in harmony with the so-called constitution was M. Fallières—that is to say, the President—whose lack of individuality and pitiful self-effacement were the nearest approach we could conceive to nonentity.

But, as I said above, M. Jaurès was only partly right. Logic was not that gentleman's forte, although he was a Utopian, and Utopians frequently make as much of logic as the devil does in Dante. The logic of a poor election is—no more than the logic of a poor constitution—the logic of facts. M. Poincaré, having been elected against the wish of M. Jaurès and his friends, it was natural that if the electorate seemed to favour the latter they should cry out that the country abode by them against the

President. But I have pointed out several times already, that French elections, having never once since 1877 offered the voters any definite issue, can never claim to be clear answers of the electorate as they are in England. The only inference that could be drawn from the election of 1914 was, that in the present electioneering system, Radical prefects, guided by a Radical Cabinet as that of M. Doumergue, were sure to return a Radical majority. But this has nothing to do with the state of public opinion concerning the superiority of some responsible person over an irresponsible assembly.

The indisputable fact is that since the Tangier affair France has constantly been in search of a man — to such an extent, that successive disappointments have only made her longing more acute. Let me leave out the traditional love of the soldier which only waits for a chance of manifesting itself, and limit myself to a rapid review of the politicians she has magnified into statesmen or chiefs, merely because they were not afraid to take their responsibilities.

At the moment of the Tangier affair, it was M. Rouvier, a man with a past, a disreputable past, but a self-made, energetic man, whom the ups and downs of existence had steeled against surprises, and who rather enjoyed a fight. I have said above how he monopolised an attention

which nobody since Gambetta had ever commanded.

At the time of the Agadir difficulty the head of government was M. Clemenceau. This remarkable individual is not easy to analyse. His purely literary works, which his political fame throws into the shade, reveal a very different personality from that to which the newspapers have accustomed us,[1] and, were it not for a pitiably narrow philosophical outlook, they would make the author decidedly sympathetic. But this side of M. Clemenceau is almost unknown. That which has made him famous is a bitter irony which has many times disported itself in actions even more than in words, and a capacity for political hatreds which talent and an off-hand manner of distributing contempt alone save from being repellent. Altogether M. Clemenceau had, during most of his existence, produced on his compatriots the effect which the presence of Gambetta at the head of affairs would, according to Bismarck, produce in Europe; he was a drummer in a sick man's room. But he had the good fortune during his tenure of office to be able to resist Germany instead of negotiating with her, and for the first time in his life his pride was indistinguishable from dignity. Then this

[1] I have endeavoured to disengage their characteristics in an article in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, May 1907.

man who appeared to be the lineal descendant of the great Jacobins, and obviously cultivated the resemblance, was on several occasions placed face to face with the Revolution, and every time crushed it in perfect disregard of its great name and perfect consciousness of the littleness of its supporters; finally, he who as a mere deputy had made himself the judge of so many Cabinets, treated the deputies and senators as if they were rather unintelligent boys with more rights to the birch than to information. One of his communications to the Chamber on the subject of the *Entente Cordiale* will remain famous by its reticence and almost insulting brevity. On the whole, M. Clemenceau, who had never acknowledged any authority, showed himself the most authoritative of Prime Ministers, and, in spite of all that in his already long life had been known against him, the country loved him for it.

Three men came after him: M. Briand, M. Poincaré, now President of the Republic, and M. Barthou. The three had real if unequal rights to the name which M. Barrès gave to the chief leaders of the republican parties: they were "the sons of the wolf." M. Briand had been not only a Socialist, but an anarchist, and it seemed unpleasantly probable that his conversion to order had been more sincere than his interest in strikes. M. Poincaré had a clean past, but

he had been too long in politics not to have gathered some of the political dust upon him, and his somewhat narrow anti-clericalism could not be associated with greatness. As to M. Barthou, a shrewd Southerner with elegant ambitions, he was celebrated for a recantation which he had made when a member of the Méline Cabinet, and which was not easily distinguishable from a political treason. Yet, one after the other, these three men were looked upon as rescuers, and it might take them years of passivity to exhaust the reserve of hope which the nation once placed upon them. Why should this be? merely because at various periods of their governments they had to speak up, show the strong hand, and on the whole make the enemies of order realise that they felt the country on their side against anarchy, and would act in consequence.

If you will contrast this impression with that which spread not only through the country but through Europe—with the sole exception of Germany—when the Doumergue Cabinet went into office, and it seemed once more as if there were no man at the wheel in France, with a foolish and riotous crew instead, you will have no doubt that France has a passionate longing for strong men. If M. Jaurès, who denied it, had been more capable of criticism, he would have been surprised at his own lack of popularity, in spite of qualities

which ought to have been essentially popular in France. Mere talent is at present played out, and character has taken its place; men like Marshal MacMahon or the Duke de Broglie, who only secured esteem in the early years of the Republic, would be to-day enthusiastically followed: the Tangier affair, by disclosing the danger of weakness, recreated the respect for energy.

6. *Transformation of Newspapers.*

The difference between French and English newspapers before the Tangier incident must strike the least attentive. The English have been placed by their situation in the world in the necessity to be attentive to what is going on in the whole world. And their patriotism is so wide awake, so much on its guard against untested theories and uncontrolled information, that it goes by facts and is mostly occupied with facts. This accuracy, coupled with the businesslike manner the English have almost universally in discussing the interests of their country, produces the wonderfully illuminating articles we can read in the great London dailies. English people are so absorbed in the matter of those compositions that they hardly ever notice their Demosthenic terseness and unconscious literary perfection.

The French, in their taste for conversations,

controversy, eloquence, and repartee, are the real descendants of the Gauls, and this tendency is so strong that it causes them too often to be indifferent to the subject on hand, and to take their chief pleasure in the handling of it. It is not surprising, therefore, that at least since the days of Louis XV—when the French colonial expansion practically stopped and the revolutionary ideas engrossed every intellect—foreign topics should not have been frequent in their talk and, above all, in their Press: those objects are too remote and often too dry to be made impassioning.

During the years which immediately preceded the danger of France, speculation, as I said before, ran riot, and the newspapers were full of it. No editor would have dreamed of trying to interest his readers in Tunis or the Congo when the whole country was making its mind up about the advisability of continuing or discontinuing the Church. The *Temps* newspaper would indeed go on devoting its first column to discussions of foreign questions which, as a rule, were a faint reflection of the same in the London *Times*, but either this was skipped or it was that which gave the paper its exaggerated renown for dullness. In most of the other dailies foreign news had to be hunted in the invisible corner where it had replaced the abstract of the Parliamentary proceedings under the Second Empire.

In a few weeks after the Tangier affair, this feature of the French Press vanished. The semi-diplomatic conversations carried on in the *Temps* and the leading German papers, lent a dignity so far unhoped-for to the daily Press. A whole school of young journalists, with a special training, abilities, and ambitions, were delighted to have a chance of playing a real part in the affairs of Europe, and while in company they would astonish by their reticence, they gradually filled the periodicals with their knowledge. To-day it is impossible to open even a provincial French paper without seeing a comparatively large space of it devoted to foreign news, and leading articles frequently discuss it. At first, indeed, it was only a fad or a pose to pretend information or interest in international questions, but, while the aristocratic readers of the *Gaulois* may be negligible in this connection, the readers of the *Petit Journal* are not, and whoever travels in the country must have noticed frequently how intelligently plain persons retail their paper on these questions.

The importance of this change cannot be exaggerated. I shall point out in another chapter how the substitution of the European for the mere party point of view in the politics of France is at the bottom of the improvement in the national spirit.

7. *Rapid Diffusion of a New Mentality.*

France, before the Tangier shock recalled her to herself, was in a state of complete anarchy. Immediately after, the reaction produced by the consciousness of danger brought about a beginning of order, and even something like a healthy —if elemental—political creed. The instinct of self-preservation, the love and respect of the army, the craving for a man which I have pointed out as aspects of that reaction may be purely spontaneous in appearance, but they cannot exist without principles making for authority and discipline, and bound ultimately to develop into a positive political system. In fact, the attitude which I shall describe farther down, as the consequence of the new spirit of France, is little else than this development.

But the French are seldom content with living their ideas: they must think and speak them, and it cannot be denied that since the second half of the eighteenth century the habit has constantly gathered strength. It is not surprising, therefore, that as the Tangier affair threw its light over mere political deficiencies, it should also have shown their connection with dangerous formulæ. As the Dreyfusist *nubes* were dispelled, a desire for a saner and higher philosophy than that which was responsible for the nation's blindness and feebleness was universally felt,

and it did not wait very long for its satisfaction. The following chapters will show that while materialism under all its forms—philosophical, social, and literary—had been gradually filtering from its earliest exponents to the lower strata in French society, some of these exponents themselves had reconsidered their ideas, and a numerous *élite*, soberer and better-informed than the Dreyfusist "intellectuals," had heard of their recantation. This was not all. While the slow-going masses were left to their digestion of materialism, other doctrines had been propounded by men far superior in talent to Zola and in intelligence—as distinguished from mere wit—to Anatole France. The books of these men had never been popular enough to counteract the coarser current, but they were universally known all the same, and the public mind had only to turn to them for the systems without which the French always seem uncomfortable. In this way a body of ideas which had been clear and distinct in the minds of thousands of cultivated individuals, but had been hindered in their expansion by unfavourable environment, was suddenly liberated, and, rapidly diffused at present by literature and by the Press, took possession of the large majority among those capable of lucid thought.

The following chapters will recapitulate the most vital of these ideas.

SECTION II

INTELLECTUAL PREPARATION OF THE NEW SPIRIT BY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BEST

THIS is the counterpart of the preparation for the intellectual and moral decadence of France which I traced to the philosophy and literature of the Second Empire, but which might be traced farther back—to the Revolutionists and their prophets, the Encyclopædists. As I said in the first chapters of Part I, France was degraded by the poor philosophy of its leading circles during the greater portion of the nineteenth century, and if this lowering of the rational light had continued, no shock, no catastrophe would have been strong enough to produce the effects which we hope to see arise more and more from the awakening of 1905. In fact, the Revolution was no lesson for most of its cultivated adherents, and, in the same way, 1870 was in a few years forgotten by the masses, because in one case, the metaphysics of the Revolution remained in the ascendancy at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and in the other only a few exceptional intellects were shaken by the German victory. The lucky coincidence, without which this book would have

no object, was the combination of a great patriotic emotion of the nation at large with a radical intellectual change of the most distinguished thinkers and writers. Were it not for this conversion the effort of France towards her recovery would depend entirely upon the political fluctuations, and would no doubt be in great jeopardy, whereas in the present circumstances politics can only weaken or retard it transiently. The fact is that the deterioration of the country would be at an end at once, if the handful of politicians who make use against it of a superannuated machinery could either be swept aside by popular indignation, or, which is, unfortunately, less probable—be won to saner ideas. There might be more mistakes made, but the national atmosphere would seem incredibly more pure and freed from its deceptive or baneful influences. As it is, the least defeat of Parliamentary omnipotence, even the least obstacle placed in the way of the Radical majority, is attended with a feeling of universal relief. All this would be impossible if the intellectual and ethical, or sentimental changes, which the following chapters will point out, were not deeper than any similar modifications of the national standpoint since the Revolution; unquestionably more so, for instance, than the poetic conversion produced by Chateaubriand with the assistance of Napoleon's strong hand.

1. *Reaction against the Revolution.*

The French Revolution is one of those colossal events which not only baffle adequate appreciation, but balk the imaginative effort: after years of deeply human reading which ought to result, and apparently does result, in vivid *tableaux*, even the historian finds himself inclined to think of the years 1789–1794 as belonging to an age divided from ours by something mysterious and intangible, almost unreal.

The political consequences of the Revolution partake of the same character. They forced themselves on the world with a violence which made criticism as difficult as composure may be during a natural cataclysm, and after sixscore years, democracy is still a dogma in millions of intellects, while the fascination of the word Liberty, without any analysis of its content, has lost little of its power.

It would, therefore, be a momentous occurrence if, in the very country which made the Revolution, an intellectual change should happen universal enough to counteract the weird effects I mentioned above, and to be in itself a sort of living criticism of the revolutionary principles. A mood may be modified to some extent by arguments, but it can only be displaced by another mood.

Very few signs of such a transformation were seen during the nineteenth century. There were, indeed, many people whom their tastes, traditions, and too often their interests or prejudices preserved from the revolutionary fascination, and they had representatives, far better than themselves, in literature, philosophy, and politics. The names of de Maistre, and de Bonald, of Lamartine—in his early verse—and of Berryer, need no comment. The Church, too, looked upon the Revolution as a sort of heresy, and this attitude ultimately resulted in the promulgation of the celebrated Syllabus of Pius IX, a document in which all the consequences derived from the dogma of liberty were anathematised. But whatever might be the authority of these opponents to the principles of 1789, the former found favour in every part of Europe—in Italy more than anywhere else—and either initiated, or assisted, or attended a universal rise, first of the *bourgeois* classes against the autocracy and aristocracy, later of the working classes against capitalists of all descriptions. In France alone the minor revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Commune in 1871, the Republican election of 1876, and the Socialist election of 1898, were all manifestations of the same spirit—they all indicated the civic and economic ascent of classes so far regarded as inferior.

Meanwhile a parallel state of mind became apparent, which was called Liberalism—that is to say, an opinion savouring of the doctrines of Liberty—and was an attempt of people rather conquered by than won to the Revolution to present its tenets in a light which might make them acceptable even to the Catholic Church. This so-called Liberal state of mind arose from the certainty in which these people were that no human power could resist the revolutionary headway, and that it was sheer waste of energy to try to do it. Such a compromise was inevitable. It found one great theorist, M. de Tocqueville, the author of a book on the United States of America, which has hardly taken a few wrinkles, and several champions whose names will be remembered among those of great and good men: the Count de Montalembert, the Duke de Broglie, Père Lacordaire, Bishop Dupanloup. But compromises are seldom successful. This one failed repeatedly, the last time in a conspicuous manner, when the *ralliement* advocated by Pope Leo XIII obviously fell short of its comparatively modest object, and had finally to be negatived by the next Pope, Pius X. The Liberals, on one hand, never were acknowledged by the ultramontane Catholics, and as a portion of the modern world they were so scanty a body as to be almost unperceived. Altogether, neither the anathemas

of Pius IX nor the concessions of Leo XIII were of historical weight in the mighty revolutionary development, and we shall presently see that the reaction came from men foreign or hostile to theological considerations, and was chiefly produced by positive experience.

Nothing can be more striking than the impression left on Taine by the events of 1870–1871, and visible in his correspondence.[1] This pure idealist, whom I have described in another chapter as completely indifferent to contingencies, had a whole portion of his soul revealed to him by the war and the Commune. He was a patriot and a man of order quite as much as a philosopher. Everything sounds surprising and almost exaggeratedly simple in this great writer, but that is because he lived in a realm of abstractions. The discovery of his own feelings reacted upon him as it must on a man accustomed to generalise from all and any data, and he who had been so remote from political considerations started the great political work which eventually became the monument called *Origines de la France Contemporaine.*

The only work worth mentioning on the same subject was Thiers's well-known but very superficial *Histoire de la Révolution.* Taine applied to these new researches a mind trained in three

[1] H. Taine, *Sa Vie et sa Correspondance,* Paris, Hachette, Ltd.

or four departments of literary activity, and a method which even his systematic intellect could not deprive of its highly scientific character. The results were remarkable. Even the criticism of such a carping specialist as M. Aulard leave the *Origines* untouched as a great historical monument.

Now, what is, on the whole, the *Origines de la France Contemporaine?* It is, in the first place, an historical investigation, the conclusion of which is the emphatic statement that the Revolution was the work, not by any means of the nation —which only wanted reforms—but of the violent few, whose history is that of the clubs of Paris and the largest provincial towns. In the second place, it is an analysis tested by numerous facts, of the revolutionary mentality. What is this? Practically that of Rousseau as appearing mostly from the *Contrat Social.* In fact, whenever the Revolutionists spoke in their own name, the principles could easily be brought round to those of Rousseau's short treatise, and they never lost a chance of expressing their sense of indebtedness to him. And what is the *Contrat Social?* An entirely idealistic construction which even the literary genius of its author could not have made the basis of an immense social rebuilding if the age had not been poisoned by speculation, and, above all, if circumstances had not been so extraordinary.

The *Contrat Social* is a mere play of the intelligence. Rousseau made abstraction while writing it from all historical data, and although he had more political sense than his modern critics will admit,[1] he finally produced a work which is nothing else than a philosophical hypothesis. Society existed exclusively by the free consent of the individuals composing it; so the authority, or government could only be delegated by the community to one or several representatives, and could not be alienated for ever. Careful distinction ought to be made between the sovereign, who in reality is the community, and the government that is only its representative. There were no subjects; equality was the basis of society, and liberty was its corollary, as nobody can be bound to his equal for a longer time than he chooses to be.

The Revolution applied these ideas in their rigour. Instead of reforming the monarchy, it made a *tabula rasa* of French society, and persuaded itself that it was rebuilding it according to the superior standards summed up in the motto, liberty, equality, fraternity.

This is not the place to criticise the *Contrat Social;* this has been done a hundred times before.

[1] The *Contrat Social* concludes in favour of decentralisation, which, in fact, is acknowledged to-day as one of the best counter-weights to the tyranny of democracy.

Suffice it to say that the evil to which the present volume reverts in numberless passages, viz. the inadequacy of a government immediately dependent upon the multitude is the direct outcome of the doctrine of Rousseau. What I deal with here is merely the influence of Taine's analysis of the revolutionary mentality as reflected from the *Contrat Social.* After several years of hard work on his book, Taine endeavoured to disengage his own impression, and it was so elemental that he was afraid it might appear ridiculous. It could be summed up as follows: Rousseau and the Revolutionists, Taine said, imagined that the government of a nation was a very simple arrangement which only needed reason to be perfect. It was an enormous mistake. Politics is less a science than an art, and this art is one of infinite complication, which only long practice helped by hereditary qualities can teach. The Revolution, ignoring this principle, was doomed to build on the unreal, and, in fact, it appears as purely systematic. Taine's ideal in politics was evidently the English view, which is less a view than an *ethos*, endlessly suggesting reform, no matter how partial, rather than wholesale destruction and rebuilding.

The reputation of Taine when he wrote the eleven volumes of the *Origines* was at its zenith. He was universally looked upon as impartial. As

a philosopher he could not be regarded as exaggeratedly attached to the beliefs of the past; in fact he professed to ignore the past in his speculations, and with the tendencies of an ascetic he had been the protagonist of materialism. As a critic and writer he had no rival. Altogether his spirit, method, and art had made him less the the chief of a school than a model, and whoever in French literature claimed any degree of sincerity acknowledged his influence.

It was inevitable that his historic views, startling as they were to a generation which had been accustomed to take the Revolution as a whole and without discussion, should modify the concepts so far admitted. A few people entered reservations: the Duke de Broglie said that he could easily bring forward as many facts in favour of the Revolution as M. Taine had adduced against it. But there were no protests, and after a quarter of a century the effect of the *Origines* is obviously greater every day. Taine's criticisms have been substantiated by most of his successors. His purely historic views on the Revolution are those of M. Sorel, of M. Madelin, and of M. Lenôtre, and M. Aulard has lost rather than gained in his encounter with grateful disciples of the master. The epic grandeur of the Revolution still remains with the nation in arms against all Europe, but it has been taken away from

the maniacs of the Comité de Salut Public. The apologists of Robespierre and Marat, even of Danton, are so few as to be invisible, and if M. Clemenceau were to speak to-day of the lesson, as he called it, given to Kings on January 21st, 1793, in the tone he could take ten years ago, he would sound more ridiculous than horrible. As to the analysis of the political philosophy of the Revolutionists, its results seem to have been final. The notion of a wholesale remodelling of a large country appears absurd, and the sovereignty of the multitude is either an academic notion, which St. Thomas Aquinas might hold, or it is an absurdity.

This change in public opinion showed itself in a manner that could admit of no doubt in 1912, at the time of the Rousseau celebrations. The fact is, that after Taine, two writers of rare merit, M. Faguet and M. Jules Lemaître, had resumed *ex professo* the investigation into the Swiss philosopher begun in connection with the Revolution by the author of *Les Origines*, and their conclusions had been severe. Rousseau was a genius, no doubt, but genius has been known many times to co-exist with more than serious shortcomings. In this instance these shortcomings were a callousness to moral niceties which seems unsurpassable, and a rare power for seeing the wrong or paradoxical side of a ques-

tion. Rousseau was a great writer, a contemptible character, and what the French language calls better than any other, an *esprit faux*. Later on M. Paul Bourget was to dwell —somewhat ponderously—on another taint of Rousseau, which he called sheer lunacy, and which the readers of the philosopher's well-known letter to Hume must have noticed, even if they called it by a milder name. As it is, when it was mooted in Parliament that the Rousseau celebrations should assume a national character, M. Maurice Barrès, who rose to speak against the Bill, was certainly the mouthpiece of all the cultivated portion of the country. In fact, when the celebrations did take place, and when, as had been proposed, the Government appeared officially at them, the absence of literary men sufficiently independent to be representative of their profession, proved clearly that the event had been changed into a mere political manifestation. The notion that Rousseau was a benefactor of the country whose language he wrote with such mastery seems impossible to revive, and the refutation of minor errors on the part of M. Faguet and M. Jules Lemaître will never amount to a rehabilitation.

Taine was not alone affected by the war and the Commune to the extent I have just indicated. With less of the feeling of a catastrophe,

and more of a disappointment, with elegance, and often with the disdain of elegance for coarse contingencies, the other prophet of the Second Empire, Renan, after taking the same lesson, took almost the same method to enforce it, and advocated similar remedies to prevent its repetition. His surprise at the brutality of the Prussians, when he had been used so long to regard their country as the home of culture, did not shake his belief in culture; it only made it more decided. But the signal failure of the Republic in the first two decades of its existence left upon him a deep distrust of the democratic aptitude for government. His book, *La Réforme Intellectuelle et Morale de la France*, is an apology for the supremacy of the intelligence, and an overt indictment of the democracy. Renan thought that no country can be true to itself unless the best in it are responsible for the government; and his natural tendency was to look for such an aristocracy among, not the so-called best-born, but the best-informed. Sages and philosophers ought to be the legislators in his Commonwealth.

This was an idea which experience had to test like every other. It was tested and found wanting when the Dreyfusist "Intellectuals" were associated with politicians in framing the public spirit of France, and when M. Berthelot, Renan's bosom friend and a chemist of univer-

sal repute, was made Minister of Foreign Affairs. The results were laughable. But Renan's name was so great towards 1880, his judgment had so much weight, that to see him secede in cold blood from the democratic side took in the eyes of the *élite* the importance of an historical fact. The impression it must have made on M. Jules Lemaître and on a number of *Lycée* professors is easily gathered from their intellectual curve.

On the whole, the Revolutionists' fallacy, that power ought to be vested in the multitude, had been exploded long before the European event which showed its absurdity; the Revolution appeared not only to the then rising school of the *Action Française*, but to many reflective minds, as a movement completely deviated from its proper object, and the plain but far-reaching principle that a country's government ought to be in the hands of experts was ready to pass into popular consciousness.

2. *Reaction against Scientism.*

Another "idol" which, in 1905, was still standing, and blindly worshipped by the millions, had also been considerably shaken before the end of the nineteenth century. That was Science, as its name used to be then written, like that of a god or living genius.

It was unfortunate that the famous phrase, "the bankruptcy of science," was, towards 1895, fathered on Brunetière, who was not responsible for more than its popular commentary. Brunetière was more dreaded than respected; he was a formidable polemist, with unsuspected resources, which made him the more dangerous, but his rhetoric was often empty, his apparent logic was frequently mere dialectics, and he had a bold way of generalising which put one on his guard against him. The consequence was that the formula "Science is a bankrupt" was challenged at once as being one of the epigrammatic statements habitual to the critic, and numberless refutations of it were given by men worth speaking for science.

It then appeared that Science was not a bankrupt, since it had not made the promises it was accused not to have redeemed, and consequently the emotion created by M. Brunetière had been unfounded.

Yet this emotion was not in vain. It might be true that Science, even as represented by Descartes in *La Méthode*, or Condorcet in his *Esquisse*, or Renan in *L'Avenir de la Science*—had not hinted that the key to the universal riddle should be found in Science properly deduced, but innumerable people had believed that such a promise had been made, and among the *bourgeoisie*

nearest to the lower classes the belief was hardly short of a dogma, and productive of powerful effects. It was, therefore, all-important, that if there existed a misunderstanding concerning Science, it should be dispelled in a way likely to serve at the same time as an illumination and a clearing away of a dangerous sophism.

In fact, the consequences of this belief in Science bore more immediately on practical life than was generally supposed. The logic of the people could not help inferring that the triumphant progress of Science meant the end of Superstition, and Superstition, since the days of Voltaire, was difficult to distinguish from faith. This was the speculative victory of Science, and it enabled the unreflective individual to trust to his betters for a system of verities that would at last be worthy of the name: many a poor school teacher who had just caught a glimpse of modern knowledge at his training college, lived in the hope that education would some day, perhaps in the near future, furnish a complete explanation of the world and life, and provide simple rules to replace the superannuated ethics. But there was another prospect which appealed to even larger numbers. Science meant speculative light, but it also meant practical progress, civilisation, a maximum of happiness on a minimum of effort—the vision, in a word, which the

Socialists everlastingly conjured up before their simple audiences.

Religion, with what its enemies call her ready-made truth and her ready-made bliss in an hypothetic future, has often been charged with soothing believers into apathy. But no apathy could exceed the passivity into which the new faith caused ignorant people to settle. It only left them the outward routine of morals: the inner impulse was promptly exhausted in default of a living source.

Therefore, it was fortunate for the moral health of France that an exaggerated mistrust of Science succeeded an exaggerated belief in it. It was good that the notion of effort in the domain of life as well as in that of thought was restored to the public consciousness, even at the cost of some disquietude. Effort is better than ignoble satisfaction and, above all, silly certitude. There was more virility in France after Brunetière's somewhat theatrical demonstration than before, and it was virility of the best kind, that which arises from lucid thought.

3. *Reaction against Materialism.*

I have pointed out above that Realism in literature was not exclusively a literary method, but had a moral *substratum* which was promptly

to appear when Realism grew as radical as it was in its nature to be, and became known as Naturalism. This underlying principle was the conviction that as there is neither beauty nor ugliness in the subjects of literary composition, there is no such thing as moral good or evil either. So the same sincerity which absolves an artist from the reproach of having no preference for beauty also absolves a man from the reproach of cynicism. The sincerity of pessimism was all the ethics of the school of Zola. I shall draw attention in another chapter to the converse influence of psychological literature on the tone of the writers who are attracted by it: moral elevation is its immediate consequence along with literary distinction.

So I need only remind the reader of this chapter that among the ideas which had been "seeds of light," and only waited for an opportunity to develop, was the condemnation of materialism in literature and art which Brunetière once more called in 1896, the Revival of Idealism. While the lower classes were absorbing slowly and after long reluctance the poison of Naturalism, there was an *élite*, led by Brunetière in criticism, by M. de Vogüé and M. Paul Bourget in literature, and by Puvis de Chavannes in art, which had broken away from the stifling dungeon and lived in sentiment instead of living in sensa-

tion. Let any great emotion impress the multitude with the feeling that sometimes sacrifice may be as natural as self-seeking and more attractive, and this noble philosophy would be sure to meet a spontaneous demand.

4. *Reaction against Internationalism.*

The well-known name of this reaction is Nationalism, and it is a phenomenon which has reappeared many times in the course of French history. In its latest form it was represented and embodied rather than formulated by Paul Déroulède. Déroulède was tall and warm-hearted, eloquent and poetic: this was enough for some people to call him quixotic. In reality he was a shrewd and practical organiser as well as a bard, and no idea of ridicule ought to attach to his quixotism. He was not twenty when the war of 1870 broke out, but he immediately enlisted, and when a short time afterwards he was wounded and incapacitated, his mother came to his general with her younger son, a lad of barely seventeen, and offered him as a substitute. After the conclusion of the peace, which he regarded as shameful, Déroulède devoted his life to the noblest propagandism for the return of the lost provinces, and to an endless warfare against the enemies of France out and inside the frontiers. His conspi-

racy, trial, and banishment are well-known episodes of a career which no suspicion of selfishness or attitudinising ever touched.

Edouard Drumont was the theorist of Nationalism, its historian, and for many years its dreaded pamphleteer. For Drumont the real enemy of France was not the German, but the Jew. The German could only be dangerous when he broke through the frontier, but the Jew had no such effort to make. He was comfortably settled in Paris, within easy reach of all the vital organs of French life. These, of course, he could not handle himself, but it was child's play for him to set in motion the links between himself and the Government. Drumont firmly believed in the equation of finance with politics and of finance with Israel, and the Panama affair came as a striking confirmation of his theory. The immediate consequence was not inconsiderable. Nationalism took on the much more active form of Boulangism, and if Boulanger had had the least touch of the Roman in him, the play would have promptly been played out: the Parliamentary Republic, which was making such a poor *début*, would have been swept off, and men less open to bribery would have replaced the unpleasantly notorious Chamber.

The lineal descendant of Drumont's Nationalism is the doctrine of the same name actively

promoted since the Dreyfus affair by the *Action Française.* The founder of this group, M. Henri Vaugeois, saw in the Dreyfus agitation the proof of the presence within the frontiers of France of the hostile influence which Drumont had revealed before the Panama affair. Only it appeared to him that the Jew was not alone to live quartered in France, fattening upon the best of the land : in his opinion there were three more classes of people who have no business in the country : the Protestants, the Freemasons, and the nondescripts from all parts of the world, whom he calls the Métèques or barbarians. The evident duty of good Frenchmen was to rid, if not the territory, at any rate the Government, of this quadruple plague, and " La France aux Français " is a motto which it is imperative to take at once in its literal meaning.

Such a doctrine was sure to be frequently exaggerated from Nationalism to chauvinism, and to sound more resolute than Christian, or even reasonable. Interpreted by a man like M. Léon Daudet, with whom violence and exaggeration are a style, no matter how attractive to some people by its picturesqueness, its inevitable result would be much more to rouse hatreds than to create unity. It is doing a poor turn to one's countrymen to persuade them that they are better than everybody else, hinting at the same time that

everybody else is mentally or morally deficient. Yet the Nationalism even of these overheated people, helped as it was by an excellent criticism of much in our democracy, was not wasted. It acted as a tonic, and at a time when the tendency was towards universal dissolution, it was not so much of a fault as it might have been, if it mostly appealed to young men, and was likely to send them excited into the streets. The clamour of a popular manifestation was welcome after years of unquestioning submission or stupid inertness.

5. *Success of Provincial Literature.*

What is called "provincialisme" is intimately connected with Nationalism, and, in fact, might be regarded as its literary form. It does not belong to any writer or thinker in particular, as its roots were visible in a great deal of the literary production antecedent to the current use of the name, yet it is difficult to view it apart from the personal development of one highly interesting individual, M. Maurice Barrès.

M. Barrès is a very fair type of modern Frenchman, and almost an epitome of the progress of France which this book endeavours to follow. He started with all the characteristics of the diseases of his day. He was an exasperated

dilettante, passionately fond of intellectual enjoyment, haughtily disdainful of inferior pleasures, and hardly less so of inferior duties. His early volumes, *Sous l'Œil des Barbares, L'Homme Libre, Le Jardin de Bérénice,* were handbooks of exquisite sensualism. Yet he had solidity under his apparently unbridled fancy, he had a sound judgment, his power of analysis was too great to admit of long self-deception, and he could but weary of a search after elusive pleasures, which endless variety alone was capable of prolonging.

In fact, by the time he wrote *Les Déracinés* he had discovered a source of self-realisation which, beside those he had known so far, had the appearance and a great deal of the virtue of disinterestedness. Man soon wearies of sensations, no matter how refined, but he never wearies of himself. So, if something in him could be made the centre of his affections, he would no longer be at the mercy of adventitious pleasures. M. Barrès thought he found this centre in the relation of man with the *milieu* to which he owes the most, in which his roots are deepest—that is to say, his home, his family, his environment, the habits and traditions of his province, the spirit of *la petite patrie*—in one word, that which is dearest to him, because it is most instinctively himself. The help which a nobleman derives from the thought of his ancestry and their traditions

everybody can obtain from a similar consideration of associations which are his own, and which nobody can borrow or steal from him, because they are truly part of his soul.

This systematic "provincialism," as it is called—without any unpleasant sense being any longer attached to the phrase—would apparently be in conflict with the comparatively recent idea of French unity. A Lorrain like M. Barrès might be inclined to remember that his province had only been part of the greater France for about three centuries, but the power of exclusion of everything foreign included in provincialism compensates this weak point. Besides, the natives of the French provinces, if they push back far enough into their history, ultimately come to Keltic times, where they have to stop, and where once more they find unity. The desire for this refreshing sensation is certainly at the bottom of the effort made by many recent Keltic scholars to reduce to a minimum the Frankish and Roman influx into the autochthonous population, and it shows to what extent a real French feeling is alive under conceptions which would seem to belong exclusively to the *savant* or to the poet.

This revelation of the native land, not as a poetic symbol, but a sort of permanent ancestor, was to produce a whole train of practical consequences. M. Barrès gradually came to reason

as follows: "If our native land holds in itself such a virtue, it must be because some active conviction forced itself upon the generations which came before us, and prevented them from adulterating the treasure handed down to them. Had it been different, had there been a breach in the precious chain, we should seek in vain for the place where we find our support. So it is with thankfulness that we look back to the past. But what a disheartening prospect if we were to fear that our successors may disregard what we ourselves have done and interrupt the tradition we strive to keep in its purity! The inference which such a thought immediately brings in its train is that we have certain rights which our descendants ought not to ignore, but it is also that we should be careful to respect the rights of those who have preceded us. In this way a continuity arises in the history of our country, the dead participate in the life which they have transmitted to us; they have their rights, the consideration of which is no burden on our minds but a refreshing element of stability."

A mere sentimental fad, some people have said. Is it a sentimental fad which alone makes the history of our country not only interesting, but even possible? Is not the notion of the presence of the dead at the bottom of that great thing, the patriotism of the Japanese? Is it not

a fact that the philosophy of the Roman history which Fustel de Coulanges has so admirably set forth in *La Cité Antique* is built on an idea almost identical with this ?

We are compelled to admit that this new Nationalism, half poetic and half scientific, is merely the intellectual formulation of one of the most venerable instincts in our nature. It wears an appearance of austereness which is not prepossessing to strangers, it is true, but it also gives to those who make it the basis of their civic life that touch of reasonableness in self-denial which was so visible in the ancients, and after a period during which elegance was to renounce patriotism as a barbaric selfishness—even if unmanly indolence attended the sacrifice—such an attitude appears as a return to an essential duty. In fact, it ought not to be called a new Nationalism or any such appellation : it is merely the feeling which must have been deep in Jeanne d'Arc, or even Philippe-Auguste, and to which the modern inclination towards analysis only adds consciousness.

It is not out of place to observe also that a system of very practical reforms termed Regionalism is immediately connected with Provincialism. The effort towards decentralisation through provincial assemblies, provincial legislation, provincial universities, &c., is part of the antagonism against the tyranny of Parliamentarism and

the routine of bureaucracy, and opens practical channels for an impulse too deep not to tend towards actual realisation.

6. *Reaction against Socialism.*

I have no intention to number Conservatism —honest and intelligent as it may be when represented by men like M. Leroy-Beaulieu, for instance—as one of the vital tendencies which, long before 1905, had held out hopes of a saner spirit in France. This criticism of the Socialist claims is too purely economical, too doctrinaire also, to rank with the moral motives I have recapitulated in the preceding chapters.

The only resistances to Marxist Socialism worth recording were very different from that cold-hearted discussion. There was on one hand the school of Catholic sociology, practically founded by Leo XIII, and which devoted itself to studying economic questions in the light of human brotherhood and, on the other, Syndicalism as opposed to *bourgeois* Socialism. I have not the least doubt but the efforts of men like M. de la Tour du Pin, M. Lorin, M. de Mun, &c., will some day be recognised when it appears that they were made in the only spirit combining reasonableness and a Christian point of view; but the practical effects of their doctrine are more visible

in Belgium and Germany than in France, and I ought not to make capital of them.

It is very different with Syndicalism, which in the last twenty years transformed the outlook in the world of labour, and at the same time gave rise to the highly interesting philosophy generally known as that of M. Georges Sorel. Until almost the end of the nineteenth century, French Socialism was little else than ancient Communism, which a political revolution ought to bring from theories into practice. It was hardly different in the *exposés* which M. Jaurès made in 1898 from what it was fifty years before, when Louis Blanc was its representative. Both men held that the working multitude should save itself from its exploiters by sending into the legislating assemblies enough deputies to secure the majority, and afterwards modify at will the *régime* of industrial property. But after half a century it appeared that if the method had not been perfected, the spirit of its protagonists had not improved either. Certainly Louis Blanc was less ambitious, less self-satisfied, and a great deal more efficient than M. Jaurès. There was a number of Socialist deputies in the Chamber, but they were either *bourgeois* like M. Jaurès himself, or workmen rapidly evolving—under the influence of a salary, of good clothes and fine talking—into *bourgeois*. Meanwhile the working classes

were not much better off: they only seemed a little more bewildered than before by beginnings as disappointing as the dreams of yore.

It was then that a poor consumptive clerk, Fernand Pelloutier, bethought himself of a new idea. *Bourgeois* Socialists were *bourgeois* all the same; they could not be representatives of labour. Chambers and Senates had nothing in common with the working classes. Therefore the working classes ought to turn their backs upon them and try to manage their own affairs. But could this be done? Easily: the principle of Association had been recognised although its legislation was not complete; there were trades unions everywhere. Let these multiply; let their most energetic members make the need of them, and also the practicability of them, recognised by fomenting strikes on any pretence wherever they did not exist, and their numbers would soon increase. Supposing that, Syndicalism thus taking strength, a wide federation of unions might become possible, some day this federation would be strong enough to vote a universal strike, during which the workmen would capture all the industrial instruments, and from that day use them without any reference to capital. This is the hope that was called *le grand Soir*.

Pelloutier died too soon to see the expansion of Syndicalism which resulted in the foundation

of the General Labour Confederacy and the manifestations of its power at the time of the postal and railway strikes, but the transformation of Socialism from a political ticket into a system of professional vindications was accomplished when he died. There were no longer parties in France, but classes more deeply divided by their conflicting interests than nations by their frontiers.

One man, who is not a workman himself, but was an intimate friend of Pelloutier, is a keen observer and a philosopher worth the name, saw this change with the gratification possible to a rarely-equipped intellect capable of subtle, though broad, comprehension, and at the same time with a satisfaction of a higher character which I will presently describe. M. Georges Sorel was past middle age when he began to be known. He had been an engineer and a manufacturer keenly interested in industrial, economic, and labour problems, and watching the organisation of the working classes with the attention both of the observer and the well-wisher. He had borne away from the École Polytechnique the craving after plain clear truth so evident in the writings of Henri Poincaré, and he spent years patiently reconsidering his ideas, and cleansing, as he says, his mind from the sediment left on it by education. He led an independent, retired, disinter-

ested life, and more and more his esteem went exclusively to truth and sincerity, while his hatred of half-lies or half-truths and his contempt of pretence increased accordingly.

The results of this long course of meditations were a considerable number of communications to the *Mouvement Socialiste*, a review of very high standing, which ultimately reappeared in book form. Of these five or six volumes, two are chiefly remarkable, and embody all the author's, not only experience, but very interesting temperament. One is *Les Illusions du Progrès*, an analysis of the historical formation of the deception known as Indefinite Progress, and the other is *Réflexions sur la Violence*, an apology for heroism, even if associated with violence. In both volumes there was, latent or explicit, a detestation of parliamentary Socialism as represented by M. Jaurès, and a keen sympathy with Syndicalism, which at the time was not yet in the hands of questionable ring-leaders. In fact, Socialism is nothing else than the vague—and consequently despicable—belief in Progress as inseparable from the Future. The idea that evolution is invariably for the better is a poor invention of the Encyclopædists, which the no less poor average education popular through the nineteenth century spread among the working classes. The success of Socialism was entirely built on the

idea, that along with the development of science must come a development of civilisation, and, eventually, the millennium promised by M. Guesde and M. Jaurès.

At the bottom of this notion was the exaggerated esteem of knowledge regarded as superior to moral worth, and the identification of the noble idea of civilisation with mere material progress. After all, what was the ideal proposed to the workers by their Socialist leaders? A very poor one indeed. It meant little else than the hope of little work, much leisure, few moral obligations, and, in default of an eternal life, which could not exist, and was only a dangerous superstition, a scale of enjoyments varying from a somewhat low materialism to the refinement of the artist. To this must the diffusion of lights lead some day, and to nothing else; and that it could lead to thus much soon appeared very doubtful to all critical minds.

Over against this philosophy the spirit of Syndicalism seemed of an incredibly nobler order. Whereas the Socialist ideal was nothing else than individual comfort, obtained almost passively by the combination of easy political methods with scientific development, the Syndicalist ideal was worthy of the name. It ignored individuals, and was exclusively attentive to the class; it proposed power as its object, but it was power

for an object which was represented as inseparable from justice; it recommended violence, it is true, but how refreshing such a violence was, compared with the Socialists' yearning after pleasure. For the Syndicalist's violence was disinterested; it was, after all, a form of patriotism, in which the idea of class was substituted for that of a country; there was nothing demeaning in it.

On the whole, M. Sorel was attracted by the Syndicalists and repelled by the Socialists, because of a fundamental preference in his mind for moral rather than for intellectual distinction. Civilisation to him meant gentlemanliness rather than comfort. Like Loti, he had much more respect for an Arabian *sheikh* than for a politician with all the varnish of a course at the Sorbonne. What he loved in the Syndicalists, as in the Jansenists, was the soldierly spirit and the aloofness from compromise. One felt that Syndicalism, with more results and less courage, would be indifferent to him. He loved heroism and cared little on what field heroism happened to display itself.

It is strange that the solitary reflections of an obscure engineer, the friend of an obscure clerk, should have reintegrated into the French consciousness the idea of heroism as lovable in itself which was for centuries one of its chief elements. Along with it there was a respect of truth and a

disgust for mere words, a tendency towards practical organisation as opposed to ranting, which were the very reverse of the politician's inborn taste for appearances. Wherever we find a criticism of the "philosophy of the belly," or of the "philosophy of humbug," we have no difficulty in tracing it to the influence of M. Georges Sorel.

The manifestations of the saner intellect of France which the six foregoing chapters recapitulate had, naturally, not passed unperceived. It was impossible that the criticisms of such men as Taine and Renan on such an event as the Revolution should not have been widely commented upon. The rise of literature from Naturalism to Idealism was also a transformation of which even the man in the street must be more or less aware. As to the effects of provincialist literature, or of the theories of M. Georges Sorel, I realise that readers unaccustomed to the deep influence which ideas wedded to a poetic or energetic expression have in France, will be doubtful of their importance. But this is one of the points about which familiar experience alone enables us to make up our minds. The fact is, that if it is true that no contemporary writer has enjoyed the position of Rousseau at the end of the

eighteenth century, it is also true that literature as a whole is more productive of effects at the present day than it was at any other period of French history. At any rate, we see clearly that the ideas which between 1880 and 1905 had slowly taken possession, some of one part of the public, some of another, reappeared, united and systematised, ready for daily use in numberless intellects when the Tangier shock created a powerful demand for right notions ordained towards right actions.

This, and not merely a patriotic emotion, was the wonderful result of the awakening of 1905. Ask anybody worth while if there really is a change in French mentality. He may at first be satisfied with mentioning the effects of the new spirit to which I shall presently come, but if you help him to analyse his impression as a Frenchman is always inclined to analyse it, the answer will eventually be: Yes, there is another spirit in France, and this spirit is one of lucidity, of diffidence against brilliant formulæ, of latent sympathy with the national tradition; such a one, in a word, as had not been alive in the country in the same degree since the intellectual intoxication of the eighteenth century.

SECTION III

EVIDENCES OF THE NEW SPIRIT

THAT the combination of roused patriotism with the deep intellectual modifications expounded in the preceding section has produced tangible effects is a fact which nobody can seriously question. I shall now go into the examination of these actual manifestations, some of which appear instinctive, while the others will show us the conscious and reasoned aspect of the new spirit.

DIVISION A.—INSTINCTIVE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE NEW SPIRIT

1. *A Patriotic Attitude forced even on Internationalists.*

At the beginning of the twentieth century the outspoken expression of patriotism was rare: Dreyfusism was voted the last word of culture, and the numberless people with whom appearances count for more than principles were afraid to indulge in a sentiment which seemed belated and inelegant. The universally prevalent certitude of peace and in the long run of a fusion of all

nations caused patriotism to look unpleasantly like chauvinism, and the consciousness of this likeness restricted all but very reticent manifestations.

To-day the situation seems completely reversed. I need not revert to the revulsion caused by the Tangier affair in men capable of a generous emotion and equal to the conscience-examination generally invited by such an emotion; men of this stamp influence rather than exemplify public opinion. Nobody was very much surprised to see M. Clemenceau, for instance, fly the French colours just at the right moment and with the proper emphasis. It also seemed natural that a man like M. André Lefèvre, till 1905 a Radical Socialist, should afterwards become pre-eminently a patriot. The real sign of the times was the transformation of less virile and more receptive intellects, sensitive to the pressure of opinion on one hand and easily impressed on the other by the conviction of minds they feel superior to their own. In this respect nothing can rival the Press for impressionability. The newspapers are go-betweens gifted with wonderful tact and seldom running the risk of being unpopular or that of appearing behindhand. Now the contrast between the tone of the papers towards 1900 and that which they have gradually adopted since 1905 cannot be exaggerated. The ultra-civilised way of approaching

international questions habitual in the days when M. Berthelot was possible as a Foreign Minister would be unbearable to-day even in the *Lanterne*. What a difference also between the M. Bérenger we knew not so long ago, who advised us to tear the flags to pieces, and the present very sensible editor of *L'Action*! Between the former editors of *Le Rappel* and M. Edmond du Mesnil! Papers of this shade at present affect a supercilious national sensitiveness, and frown and scowl at Germany on the least pretence with the best *Chauvins* of fifteen years ago. As to the internationalist press, it is so low upon the horizon that only professionals know where to find it.

The amorphous politician shows the same transformation. I have followed with as much interest as amusement the subtle though quick phosphorescences announcing modifications in the surroundings of young men like M. Herriot, the Mayor of Lyons, and M. Paul-Boncour, erewhile Minister of Fine Arts, both perfect samples of the rising politician with whom success means more than politics. How elegantly they managed to become patriots while retaining the touch of Socialism which was fashionable when they first launched in politics! How cleverly they colour the somewhat sickening stuff they retail! How daintily these consummate young actors let you infer by almost unperceived intonations that they

only want to please you, but if you insist on being pleased with outspokenness, they are ready to be more outspoken. Indeed, such barometers are infallible.

But more obvious indications of the change are not wanting. Is it not remarkable that the Socialist group in the Chamber, which once refused to discuss any question connected with the budget of war, is now everlastingly engaged on military technicalities? No general wrote or said so much about the driest details of mobilisation as M. Jaurès. A stranger might hear him for an hour in the Chamber without suspecting that he was not a nervous patriot, hypnotised by the dangers arising from an insufficient frontier line. Ten years ago such speeches would have seemed barbarous, insulting for neighbouring nations, and recklessly dangerous for peace. To-day they are merely the proper expression of a feeling which it would be shameful to ignore.

The fact is, that whatever may have been, and may still be, the influence of M. Maurice Barrès' view of patriotism as the noblest and richest of our emotions, there is another more powerful cause which compels even weaklings to declare themselves patriots. No motive acts so energetically on the French as the fear of appearing either ridiculous or cowardly. It seemed ridiculous before 1905 to speak of the possibilities of a

war, because war was supposed to be impossible, and one ran the risk, by thinking the contrary, of being regarded as either a braggart or an uneducated lout. To-day the ridicule is for people—there are still a few left—simple enough to believe, as Jules Simon did in 1867, that France has only to give the example of disarmament, to be followed by the rest of Europe, and the shame would be for those who might appear to dread war from personal considerations. This is quite enough to change the whole philosophy of war with the most independent spirits. The transformation was visible at the time of the Agadir incident in 1911: the most resolute Syndicalists, men with whom interest counts less than an ideal, no matter how wrong sometimes, in a moment forgot the pacifist theories they had held or heard for years, and were for taking up arms immediately.

What is only an attitude with neutrally-disposed individuals is a much deeper feeling with the bulk of the French nation. The trend of politics alone during the last few years is enough to prove it. Patriotism has gradually become one thing with the military precautions destined to safeguard the national independence of France, but these precautions having been first suggested by the Cabinets of M. Poincaré, M. Briand, and M. Barthou, the political enemies of these gentlemen have thought it a good platform to advocate,

on the contrary, an alleviation of military charges. The first impression of patriots, therefore, was one of anxiety when they saw Radicals of the type of M. Doumergue and M. Viviani come into office. Were they not bound by solemn promises, taken at a plenary convention of their party at Pau, to move at once a reduction of the military service to a period inferior to three years? Yet nothing of the kind was done or even mooted. It is very well for a convention of politicians to devise a useful platform before an election, but the platform cannot be made the basis of a serious parliamentary action without the risk of mortally offending the country. Nothing shows better the progress made by France in the direction of efficient patriotism than this impossibility for demagogues to propose to the country a measure likely to flatter careless tendencies, but at the same time to alarm wide-awake watchfulness.

2. *Substitution of a European for a Party Point of View.*

This is only another aspect of patriotism. When the French were absorbed in the welfare of the universe, they forgot to consider whether the interests of mankind might not be in conflict with those of their own country. Now that the Dreyfusist philosophy has been found to lead,

not to the liberty of all, but to a great danger of thraldom for its own apostles, the situation is reversed, and—as Vernon Lee wrote, in surprise and disgust, to the well-known philosopher, Paul Desjardins—the French watch the movements of Europe with so much attention, that they neglect all their former interests. It is not merely, as this lady said in the same letter, because they are engrossed by the thoughts of a war, some fearing, others longing for it. It is rather because they have become conscious once more of political realities, and, in spite of six generations of Idealists behind them, see clearly that they have either to pay attention to trivial details, or make up their minds to be dupes for ever. This new attitude may be occasionally nervous, sometimes reluctant, but it is practically universal, and as we see the Socialists take a soldier's interest in things military, we also hear them frequently discuss economic or diplomatic questions with a great display of references to consular reports. It was not under the Combes government that the settlement of a minor difficulty with the customs of the United States could have been given so much attention as it received in the summer of 1914. I noticed in a previous chapter the space which even popular newspapers now devote to such technicalities as those concerning the Bagdad railway or the Per-

sian oil-fields. Many indications of the same interest could be found in the frequency of economic investigations, travels for an economic purpose, the predominance of commercial geography, or of questions relative to international law at examinations, &c. This kind of erudition, combined with the general patriotic feeling, has gradually brought about an attention to contingencies which, only a few years ago, we were inclined to regard as eminently English, but which is no surprise to the student of French diplomatic history from the days of Louis XII till those of Louis XV, and even of Louis-Philippe. The spread of French civilisation then was not left exclusively to the contagion of French culture.

Whatever may be the ultimate results of this change of outlook, its present effects are certainly good. It makes for lucidity and decision, two qualities which, until the national mind was poisoned by humanitarianism, were looked upon as characteristically French. In this respect it is only one side of the steady return to tradition noticeable in so many other manifestations. But one immediate consequence of it ought to be considered with special attention: I mean, the decrease of party spirit, which intelligent patriotism kills as effectively as quinine kills fever.

Here, of course, we find the stone of scandal

on which many good Frenchmen and all the well-wishers of France abroad are sure to stumble. Everybody realises that devotion to the great interests of the country is irreconcilable with petty divisions, and yet such divisions exist in France; and every now and then they still fill the papers or the Parliamentary proceedings as they used to do towards 1900; they appeared scandalously at the time of the presidential election, at the Pau convention, in the overthrow of M. Barthou and M. Ribot, in the sly opposition made by M. Clemenceau, M. Caillaux, and M. Jaurès to President Poincaré, and they are evident whenever the least pretence makes it possible to give a theological tinge to any discussion.

This is true. But in spite of its visibility, this anomaly is only important in appearance, and because the paradox of a Chamber with an unbalanced power, as I have said before, and shall have other occasions to repeat, must magnify all that relates to parliamentary politics. In fact, the divisions of the Chamber are based less on dissimilarities of standpoint concerning important issues than on conflicting personal interests, and they result in talk rather than in tangible action. The danger of this jockeying would be evident, did it only result in loss of time, in bewildering the country, and puzzling foreign ob-

servers. But it is rather the consequence of a bad system than an essential evil, like the inferior philosophy which once caused universal deterioration. In other countries political divisions inevitably lead to variations of policy. It is not difficult to imagine, for instance, how different the history of England in recent years would read had the Conservatives been in office. But in France we saw M. Viviani carry on exactly the policy of M. Barthou, which as a deputy he constantly opposed. The wider—what we might call the European—point of view forces itself both upon the country and its Government, and party divisions only subsist as convenient watchwords.

This appears evident in the attitude adopted by men of an independent spirit, whatever their political opinion may be, who cannot refrain from pointing out what strikes them as a ludicrous paradox. Very few are more interesting to hear than M. Marcel Sembat. This gentleman is one of a few wealthy young men who, towards 1898, when Socialism was young and elegant, could not resist the attraction of the new doctrine, and devoted their millions to the cause of M. Jaurès. M. Sembat seldom influences the Chamber: he is too gay, too sarcastic, too sceptical about men, whether friends or foes, too detached from the effect his speeches might produce, and all this gives him an appearance of superficiality which

warrants resistance on the part of deputies undoubtedly his inferiors, but who think themselves more serious because they are less witty. Yet M. Sembat is none the less one of the clearest intellects there are in Parliament or in the Press, and although he never influences a vote, all that he says or writes is noticed and commented on. Now he is convinced that peace is better than war, and that progress can be conceived apart from territorial expansion—that is to say, he thinks that one day may come when Socialist humanitarianism will be sufficiently spread in Europe to serve as a basis for international relations. But whereas Dreyfusist politicians would act as if this state of affairs already existed, M. Sembat sees clearly that it is only a very remote hope, and that, meanwhile, war, whether offensive or defensive, must be a constant consideration in modern politics. Now, while Frenchmen, grown up with the blinkers of party spirit universal before 1905, would look upon the persistence of the republican *régime* as a dogma to which even the existence of the country ought to be made subservient, M. Sembat thinks, as practically every sensible person at present does, that the question of the *régime* is a minor one in comparison with that of the national independence. In this state of mind he was not afraid to publish in the summer of 1913 a volume defiantly

entitled, *Faites un Roi, sinon faites la Paix.* Evidently he believed that the Republic has for its chief object the maintenance of peace, but he also realised that peace or war were not the free choice of European nations at the present day, and he sacrificed the whole fabric of his party to the exigencies of a higher policy than that of parliamentary groups. The book may not have promoted royalist propagandism as much as royalist writers imagined, but it was a powerful demonstration of the complete change in outlook brought about by the danger revealed in 1905 and 1910, and as such its importance was considerable: party as opposed to patriotism, the Republic itself as placed over against France, are now things of a past, when the French lived like Leibnitz' monad, without any outside windows.

The substitution of a European for a mere political standpoint is so deadly for petty considerations that we have seen it several times replace even religious questions in their true perspective and show that blind anti-clericalism may be as pernicious for France as anti-patriotism itself. This is no small achievement, for the idea of the Roman tyranny, with its escort of intellectual oppression and universal regress, is a long-lived bugbear. Two men who were never suspected of an exaggerated partiality for religion, M. Leygues and

M. François Deloncle—the latter of whom especially was long known as an active Freemason—have been able on various occasions to point out to the Chamber consequences of the complete separation from Rome which exposed its absurdity. The protectorate of Catholic missions which made the presence of the French flag a matter of course wherever there were Catholics in the East, was virtually abolished by the Separation Law, which its authors meant as a declaration of indifference to all religions, and since the enforcement of that law it has quietly passed over, according to circumstances, to Italy or Germany. In the same way, the law against religious orders was not intended for religious establishments—according to Gambetta's principle that anti-clericalism is a bad export—but it was inevitable that if orders should be suppressed at home their numbers would promptly decrease abroad. These alternatives were dwelt upon at considerable length by M. Leygues and M. Deloncle without any show on the part of the Chamber of the childish sensitiveness of yore, and for the first time since the suppression of the Embassy to the Vatican, a religious question could be discussed exclusively from the national point of view. I am aware that after that date the Government suppressed a number of religious establishments which had been tolerated since 1901, but this is

only another instance of the opposition between the spirit of the country and the action of politicians. The Government suppresses convents to reassure the Radical party on its tottering condition by creating in them the illusion that nothing is changed, and it will secretly support Catholic French schools at Beyrouth or Jerusalem.

3. *Anachronism of so-called Idealist Manifestations.*

Some people are impervious to all the reasons they might have to modify either their notions or their attitude. They are not always unintelligent: they may be only obstinate—sometimes with great gentleness—or inattentive and dreamy or nervously enthusiastic. Almost in every case it is not difficult to account for their indifference to what is going on in the world by subtle interests blinding them to the logic of a situation. Whatever may be the reasons of their behaviour, it is inevitable that they should be few, that their influence should be small, and that a touch of perplexing singularity should be attached to what they say or do.

This is the case with the rare groups of men one may still find, who have hardly modified their line since the Dreyfus ebullition. Such periodicals as *Les Droits de l'Homme*—edited by

the son of Père Loyson—*Les Documents du Progrès, Le Courrier Européen, Les Cahiers d'Aujourd'hui,* continue to think of France as pre-eminently the intellectual laboratory of the universe; but how unimportant they have become since the not very long past days when their columns were the store-rooms of advanced thought! What a feeling of sameness and staleness we experience whenever we have an occasion to look into them! How antiquated their effort to appear fresh and unconventional seems to us, wedded as it almost invariably is with artistic or literary formulæ of more than impressionistic sophistication about which we have long made up our minds. We know quite well that the restricted public which retains its belief in those performances may think itself distinguished, but rather deserves to be called eccentric. If one were to deduct from the subscription lists of these periodicals the names of foreign artists or foreign nondescripts, who will mistake the exceptional for the rare, of the Jews who cater for them, of the Bohemians who imagine or pretend they take an interest in novelties, there would be a very small number of real natives left. French taste and French conviction have been hopelessly alienated from humanitarianism since it turned out to be profitable to everyone except France. In the last months of 1913 two new magazines

appeared, one of which, called *Messidor*, purported to be resolutely idealistic, and the other, called *La Renaissance*, stated its object to be all that can unite the French: the difference of welcome in favour of the latter on the mere reading of advertisements was striking, in spite of brilliant and reassuring names on the staff of *Messidor*.

All that recalls the dangerous vagueness or the gullible broad-mindedness of the years 1898-1905 has become ridiculous or repellent: a Franco-German league, the Berne conference for peace, a committee for the erection of a statue to Robespierre, are all equally mocked or equally despised, and the general tendency is to suspect foreign influences in them.

One fact can help the reader in measuring how far the French have progressed in the direction of lucidity and in antipathy against false positions: it is the distance between the literary and the patriotic estimation that are made of two such men as M. Romain Rolland, and, above all, M. Anatole France. *Jean-Christophe* would undoubtedly be a popular masterpiece if its atmosphere were not such as to invite at once a German translation. In spite of the author's resolute statement that "he has annexed Germany," the readers will believe that he simply felt the fascination which Michelet had experienced before

him and been annexed himself. As to M. Anatole France, he has lived long enough to become a sort of conundrum. It is disconcerting to find that the same man may have distilled the wisdom there is in such books as the Bergeret volumes or *Les Dieux ont Soif*, and ranted in a turgid manner at Socialist meetings; that a man who intellectually is so unmistakably French should put his name to anti-militarist posters or prefix it with "Salut et fraternité." The writer who undoubtedly represented in its highest perfection the charming dilettantism of 1890, the flower of French perversion, when this perversion was not supposed to be dangerous, is only at the present day really popular abroad. In his own country, strange as it may sound, M. Anatole France is a fossil.

4. *Increased Distrust of Parliamentary Action.*

The Chamber which, after long swaggering and hectoring, had finally to confess its helplessness in the settlement of the difficulties with Germany, and later in the repression of Syndicalist disturbances, and the Chamber—its immediate successor—which voted the raising of the deputies' salary, were regarded with undisguised contempt. Since then, the Chamber which went

out in 1914 did two things which somewhat reconciled the country to it, and created a better feeling: it passed the Proportional Representation Bill, which is a moral measure, and the Three Year Service Bill, which was a necessity indeed, but could not be done without something like courage. The Chamber returned in May 1914 has ratified the Three Year Service Law, and it contains a fair proportion of deputies not unwilling to consider a reform of the Constitution, which would inevitably result in a diminution of the Chamber itself. This again looks like conscientiousness. It would seem, therefore, as if Parliament stood better chances in public opinion than it has had for many years.

But, on the other hand, the Chamber elected in 1914 is in the power of the Radicals, as the rapid doom of the Ribot Government proved without any question, and what are the Radicals in public estimation? First of all, the enemies of M. Poincaré, who, at the time of his election at least, represented the best French tendencies; then the liars who declared themselves against the Three Year Law at the Pau convention, and dare not abide by their own decision; finally the inquisitors into private fortunes who have abetted the Socialists in the drawing up of the Income Tax Law.

All this, joined to the consciousness, every

four years strengthened, that the elections are fundamentally insincere and invariably unintelligible, results in a feeling of deep mistrust, which the recent importance taken by the Senate only increases. Until the presidential election of 1913, the Senate brought on itself less of the animadversion gathering around the Chamber. The Upper Assembly lived in comparative obscurity and humility, and its dealings seemed hardly public. So while there was no sympathy for it, there was none of the antipathy which attached to the ravenous Chamber. This was changed in the spring of 1913, when the Senate did its best for the nonentity Pams against M. Poincaré, at a time when the country was pining for a man. Since then the impression has been that Parliament is less than ever the representation of the country, that a few influential persons there as everywhere else pull wires and regulate the whole loose machinery, and that a subtle hypocrisy enables the Chamber to pretend to do things which it knows the Senate will undo. So the prevalent feeling now, as in 1905, is one of hesitation and mistrust of Parliament, with a greater consciousness of the impossibility of doing anything against it.

Is not this disposition irreconcilable with the return of lucidity and energy which I regard as the fortunate consequence of the Tangier conver-

sion? Not at all; it is only the uncomfortable sensation that there is something hopelessly wrong in the Constitution. Underneath this sensation there is the passionate longing for a change, which, in the first decade following 1875, would have been unthinkable, and the possibility of a sudden overthrow to which I shall revert in the third part of this volume. The country can apparently do nothing against its half-unconscious oppressors beyond wishing for their disappearance, but such a wish is a force in itself.

5. *Syndicalism reduced to its True Proportions.*

In the early years of the present century, Syndicalism appeared formidable. The trade unions, advised by Fernand Pelloutier, had taken advantage of the law of 1901 on Associations, not only to have their individual existence legally recognised, but to lay the foundations of the vast federation known as the General Labour Confederacy. It seemed inevitable that a popular movement, revolutionary in its object, no doubt, but apparently justified by contingencies, and not illegal, should attract all the energies of the working classes and spread to all the corporations. It seemed almost as certain that the Government of those days, resting largely on the

Socialist vote, and, Socialism not appearing as yet clearly distinguishable from Syndicalism, the number of Socialist deputies must promptly become large enough to make a revolution a matter of course. The postmen's and electricians' strikes, on the other hand, showed how powerful the Bourse du Travail had already become, and the negotiating attitude of M. Clemenceau and M. Briand, then Prime Ministers, meant the consciousness of impotence. So Syndicalism was the spectre before which everybody trembled.

But here, too, the Tangier, and especially the Agadir, emotion brought a change. Syndicalism did not mean only a corporate movement: it amounted to anti-patriotism and anti-militarism. It seemed a certainty that in case of a war the Syndicates would obey the directions all ready at the Bourse du Travail, and oppose the mobilisation. Now, after Agadir it turned out that the workers, even the Syndicalists, were, in an overwhelming majority, prepared to follow their military rather than their labour leaders. A deeper reaction could not but follow, and it put the workmen on their guard against ring-leaders who, according to the recent avowals of one of them, Pataud, were only too inclined to go over to the *bourgeois*, just like the Socialists. As this coincided with the appearance of stronger governments made necessary by the common

danger, it soon appeared that the General Labour Confederacy had been more influential through the terror it inspired than through its real position, which, moreover, was now demonstrated to be decidedly illegal. Finally, in 1913, anti-militarist propagandism having once more been denounced as coming from the Bourse du Travail, M. Barthou had the building searched, confiscated documents, and imprisoned several of the chief leaders, without raising any serious protest. Ten years before such an action would have been madness, to-day it appears common good sense.

As a conclusion, the Syndicalist movement seems at present less revolutionary in France than it is in England, or in America, and one terrible ghost has been laid. In its place two very different fears—the anxiety over German progress and discomfort at the mismanagement of the Senate and Chamber—have risen, and as they are founded on circumstances which can be fought and modified with much less difficulty, they are far less depressing.

6. *A Higher Moral Standard forced on the Public Spirit.*

The reader, in several of the following chapters —dealing with the younger generation, with the influence of the Church, and with contemporary

literature—will find various indications of a return of the French to traditional morals, and even to religion as the most powerful element in the morality of a nation. But it would be misleading not to emphasize a transformation which, in spite of some hesitancy, is characteristic of the spirit I am describing.

A moral lowering was inseparable from the intellectual deterioration which we have examined in the first part of this volume. Scepticism invariably results first of all in elegant, and sooner or later in coarse cynicism. The passage from eighteenth-century *persiflage* to Revolutionary grossness was exactly repeated in the passage from the comfortable negations of the Second Empire to the moral vulgarity of the Third Republic.

For years this admixture of intellectual indifference with moral looseness was in all Europe a scandal not only to goodness, which was natural, but also to ignorance or hypocrisy, which made France seem to be in a worse condition than she was in reality. The French never struck careful observers as morally inferior to most European nations, but they knew no conventionality, no outward restraint, and, as a consequence, they boldly denied the metaphysical basis of morals, paraded cynicism, professed themselves worse than they were when they happened to be bad,

and smiled at their own goodness when they happened to be good. In short, they were the victims of low doctrines, no doubt, but above all, of a low tone.

To-day this style has so entirely ceased to be fashionable that it looks provincial even in the country, and the French show themselves sincere admirers ot all moral elevation. They are not very good preachers as yet, because their education leaves them convinced that preaching only belongs to deep religiousness, and because the national thoroughness prevents them from attempting what they feel they only can do in part. But wherever they see a good doctrine or a good example they recognise it, and they do their best to extirpate a few shortcomings which used to give special offence. Every newspaper speaks against depopulation and advocates legal action against its apostles; the long-tolerated indulgence of the juries for *crimes passionnels* is so frequently inveighed against that in the long run the protest must create a wholesome severity; even the looseness which attracts so many foreigners to a few Parisian theatres has lost its defenders; the so-called artistic excuses which used to be put forward to keep up certain exhibitions are never heard with so much sarcastic scepticism as when they come from apparently-convinced people. The censorship has been abol-

ished, but the very papers that used to mock and rally it, set the police in motion to do the work it once did so badly, whenever there is a serious reason for it.

We are still far from a healthy degree of austerity, without which nations fall easy preys to moral diseases; the whole atmosphere emanating from commercial or industrial as well as literary activity, that which transpires through conversations, and is understood under every printed statement, is a wish for easy, independent living, with enough money to make to-day enjoyable and to-morrow secure. But if people thus stand for the *vie large*, they have ceased to stand for the *vie libre*. Loose principles no longer seem inevitably associated with the possession of fortune: the complete failure of *Le Phalène*, the play of M. Bataille, conceived in an atmosphere undoubtedly superannuated, was a proof of this.

As to the reasons, they are many and complex. But the two causes which we discover at the end of all the mental avenues we happen to enter in this investigation are visible here as everywhere else. In the first place, a better philosophy, based on a more thorough criticism of principles once welcomed as scientific, has restored a metaphysical value to the moral instincts of mankind, and, in the second place, a sane pragmatism arising from the necessity of

giving food and support to collective as well as to individual courage, compels the man who champions good citizenship to promote at the same time a moral creed without which self-denial is impossible or transient. To this extent can we say that the national awakening has produced ethical revival.

7. *Anomaly of the Stage Considered.*

It has been too ready an assumption with some writers that life and the drama are parallel, and that the morality of the modern world can be inferred from that of its theatre. Printed instances are numerous. J. J. Weiss, an admirable dramatic critic, too much forgotten already, though he was at his zenith twenty-five years ago, has entitled one of his volumes *Le Théâtre et les Mœurs;* another volume by a clever and witty though rather superficial barrister, M. de Saint-Auban, is called *L'Idée Sociale au Théâtre;* another, written by M. François Veuillot, almost exclusively from the religious standpoint and very sound in many ways, approaches dramatists as *Les Prédicateurs de la Scène.* All these works assume more or less explicitly that a modern play being a slice of life, if you bring enough of these slices together you will have a very nearly complete image of modern life, and if you

disengage their points of view, you will obtain something like the modern man's philosophy.

Nothing is apparently so like daily reality as the play: the language we hear in the theatre is our common slang in all its stages of refinement or coarseness; the ideas, the prejudices, the manners of theatrical characters must be like those of the people we meet in real houses, or we damn the play as turgid or sentimental. We resent any intrusion of the dramatist into the actions and utterances of his creations, and we imagine that the numberless histrionic attempts which year after year succeed one another must exhaust the situations possible to our contemporaries. Curiously enough, we conceive no mistrust against the veracity of playwrights from their occasional indulgence in the apologues called *pièces à thèses*, or plays with a purpose. Their frequent awkwardness gives us no misgivings, and their confidence, that of the prefaces with which they are generally published, that of the critics who discuss them gravely in the newspapers, only confirm us in the belief that the stage mirrors the world. It is only when we look attentively into some considerable portion of the dramatic production that we find out that plays are hardly ever written for our enlightenment, but merely for our amusement; that their outlook is as restricted as that of the short stories in the maga-

zines; that they are beset on all sides with conventionalities and cramped by the narrowness of the stage; that the so-called *thèses* are mostly another effort to give the plays *actualité*; the philosophical disquisitions of the critics on their import inane verbosity or sheer humbug, and the so-called *ex professo* books on the ethics of the stage strings of forgotten articles reprinted under fallacious titles. Then you realise that you would be more than imprudent to seek the standard of a nation's morality exclusively or even principally in its dramatic literature, and you modestly limit yourself to taking stock of what the play really holds of current ideas and modern situations, without hoping to rival in any way a judicious collection of *faits-divers* from the penny newspapers. There are cartloads of mere literature in these professedly objective productions. The moral influence of the old comedy was summed up in the Latin phrase: *Castigat ridendo mores*, and that of the tragedy in the notion which some Goethean heroine had formed to herself of a good romance—viz. a book with characters one would like to resemble. To-day our playwrights want to be regarded as philosophers and directors of conscience. I once saw with no little surprise a Latin volume of Casuistry in the hands of a young friend of mine. "Are you tormented in your soul?" I asked. "No," replied he, "I

am looking for a dramatic theme." But before fifteen years are over he may give moral consultations to deferential journalists. He will be in the right of it: playwrights sit side by side with jurists in the committees for marriage reforms. They have taken the place of bishops in the councils of the commonwealth, as physicians replace the confessors in family consultations. Alexandre Dumas, junior, with just a mite of his father's genius, was the first Frenchman who played this rôle with perfect seriousness. He wrote plays which were technically good and morally daring —that is to say, doubtful; he appended to them prefaces which were generally much better than the plays; when, in his preface to *L'Etrangère*, in 1879, he stood as a conservative against the radicalism of Zola, his ethics got the credit of his literature, and he was well-nigh looked upon as a Father of the Church.

Some ten years later the French discovered Ibsen, and their pleasure in the discovery doubled their belief in the play with a far-reaching moral import. Inferior snobbism immediately disported itself in symbolism, while the superior kind resulted in Maeterlinckian adaptations. But the credit of the theatrical moralists became greater and greater, and several of the rising young playwrights did not take the trouble to conceal their ambitions, and boldly began to preach at once.

M. Hervieu is the least sophisticated of all. His dramas are simply apologies or demonstrations, and he does not mind if the rough side of his tapestry is as visible as the other. In order to show that the old adage, *Verba volant*, is only right when the words are kind or at least indifferent, he writes *Les Paroles Restent*, a real charade, in which we see a woman ruined by an imprudent speech of a man who afterwards does all he can, but in vain, to redeem his inconsiderateness. The title of the play is quite superfluous; the least attentive spectator would supply it at a second's notice if it were missing. M. Hervieu is clearness itself. He is a great feminist, and looks upon our Code as barbarously partial for the men. He just picks up some text in it and embodies it in a dramatic action destined to show its absurdity. In *Les Tenailles* it will be the article which empowers the husband to conduct the education of his children. We shall see a man and woman fighting over a delicate boy whom the husband wants to send to school while his consort refuses. Such scenes happen every day, and Captain Marryat has painted one in an immortal manner in the first pages of *Mr. Midshipman Easy* without troubling his head about any sort of philosophy. But M. Hervieu makes his case highly dramatic by letting us know that the husband is not the father of his son, and by turning in

consequence the wife into a martyr at once. In *La Loi de l'Homme* it is another aspect of the same situation. An exquisite woman, Madame de *Raguais* has to live with her husband, a low creature, because she cannot legally establish his unworthiness—of which, however, she is sure—and she must bear to see her daughter marry the son of her husband's mistress because the wretch takes the side of the impassioned girl.

When you read a drama of M. Hervieu's you see both the tragic action and the legal demonstration proceed together step after step with infallible and geometrical precision, and you realise that, whatever legal possibility you might give to M. Hervieu to treat, he would in a minute carry it on to the stage with counts and countesses instead of the Caiuses and Titiuses of the old ethical treatises. But are we convinced by his precise machinery? Not at all. We leave the theatre with our old impression that everything is not right here below, far from it, but it is wise after all that the head of a family should be entitled, at least in theory, to final decisions on serious issues. The drama lives on individual cases, laws are just the reverse.

The method of M. Brieux is less rigid than that of M. Hervieu; we feel less while seeing his plays that we are in the hands of a school-teacher who will not let us go until we know our lesson

thoroughly, but his intention is even more decidedly to reform modern society. *Blanchette* is an indictment against the hypocrisy of the so-called encouragement given to primary education. We persuade a girl that if she succeeds in taking a degree she will be inevitably successful, and will at once rise above the station to which she belonged; but when she has secured the precious parchment she finds herself not above but out of her class, and need drives her to the worst extremities. *M. de Réboval* is the story of a senator who thinks himself a politically unimpeachable character, and privately a model of virtue, because he has managed to keep up two homes without causing any scandal. The whole fabric of his life comes to grief when his son in home No. 1 falls in love with his daughter in home No. 2. *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* shows the necessity in which girls are nowadays not to marry or to marry beneath them if they have no money; no novelty, to be sure, but the play is an admirable drama. *La Robe Rouge*—M. Brieux's greatest success—is a violent attack upon the magistracy. A minor judge in some provincial court has no other dream than to don the red gown of the high councillor in Paris. By extraordinary good luck a murder is committed in his district, and he feels sure that if he can find and convict the murderer his promo-

tion is certain. In fact he hunts down the supposed assassin with the ferocity of a bloodhound. *Les Remplaçantes* is a scathing criticis n of the frivolous Parisian women who will not nurse their children—I mean their one child—themselves, and trust its life to a woman "in whose glass they would never drink," without reflecting that the woman has left her own baby and her husband in a far-away village, and that through their selfish indulgence a home has been broken.

M. Brieux has treated the question of divorce in three or four plays—*Le Berceau, La Déserteuse, Suzette*—invariably from the feminist point of view inherited from Alexandre Dumas. The future of the children seems to him the chief question to consider, and he thinks that no household where there is a child ought ever to be broken up, but that if this catastrophe actually happens, the children must be left with their mother, whose claims upon them are supreme. Other plays deal with parliamentary corruption, with the betting mania among the poorer classes, with a certain foolish respectable reticence, &c. M. Brieux is scared by no object.

Beside this revolutionist, with a great deal of latent Christianity in him, we can place M. Paul Bourget, who has become harshly traditional as he became a practising Catholic. His plays are quite as successful as his novels, but they are

very different from his early productions, so subtle and tender. He takes invariably the side of the strong and narrow-minded if they happen to have tradition on their side, and advocates his ideas in apparently solidly-built dramas. In *Le Divorce* it is the disruption of a man and wife's happiness because the wife, after years of untroubled bliss, has religious scruples about her husband's previous divorce; in *L'Emigré* it is the rôle of the aristocracy in our modern society; in *La Barricade* it is the class-fight, and in *Le Tribun* it is the impossibility for a politician to be true at the same time to his Socialist principles and to his paternal instincts. Wherever the exponents of the individualism invented by Rousseau and made popular by the Revolution speak of the rights of man, M. Bourget comes forward full of the rights of society, and showing that they can only be maintained by the sacrifice of individuals. If you are rich, strong, and contented, M. Bourget's plays will give you reasons for putting up with the woes of your less fortunate brethren; if you are weak, ill-treated, and unhappy, you had better keep away from his theatre.

To these three best-known stage preachers one might add M. Mirbeau, M. Ancey, M. Descaves, and a few others of less note. Most dramatists go the ways of novelists, and as age

and fortune come to them they feel a growing propensity towards moralising.

Have you an impression that any of the subjects I have mentioned is likely to cause consideration among the public, even among playgoers? Or do you feel, on the contrary, that all that may be interesting, but the proper time for discussing it is after dinner in a smoking-room, while morals, real morals, are reserved for private meditation? To ask the question is to answer it. Nobody will get very much excited over the situation of school-teachers, or the laziness of society women, or the corruption of politicians, or the antediluvian difficulty of marrying off girls *sans dot*, or the grievous faults of Dame Justice, or the grievances of the French aristocracy. One knows that a good deal of what is wrong here below is inherent in some fundamental wrongness, and that the rest has such deep and intricate roots that it is difficult to pluck up the principal one. The notion is a philosophy in itself.

What people take a real and living interest in is tangible, and not academic. If the high cost of living could be clearly and dramatically exposed on the stage, the play would be a tremendous success. Write against the Yorkshire schools or the meat-packing scandals, you secure an audience at once, and the indignant feeling

you raise does more than forty years' work. Or take advantage of some transient but very warm emotion, and have *Electra* performed in Spain, or some anti-militarist play in Paris at the right moment: you are sure of endangering several lives and shaking various institutions.

If you go to history and inquire what dramas with a purpose have ever been effectual, you will invariably find that they summed up and voiced some diffused impression, not always the one which the dramatist wanted to make use of. *La Dame aux Camélias* aimed at being a denunciation of philistinish hypocrisy; and it was that, no doubt, but it was, above all, the signal of a conscious and henceforth avowed indulgence for a certain class of women. *Les Avariés*, by M. Brieux, was also intended to be an apology for outspokenness about a very delicate and terrible subject, but the feeling it produced was selfish and cynical. Whenever an idea is in the air the least spark will make it flash. When it is not, no amount of tragical preaching will create it. That is why, after all, successful dramas with a purpose are first good comedies or tragedies, no matter what their purpose may be, and it is foolish, if one wishes to be informed of the preoccupations abroad in a country, to go to the theatre; the right place is the roadside inn.

It is another matter if, instead of being in

quest of a list of widely-discussed issues capable of being put down in a note-book and eventually in a newspaper, one is anxious to come at the innermost soul of a nation, at the something impalpable which with individuals is felt rather than seen in the smile or in the tone of the voice, and with communities constitutes what is called their spirit or manners. Of this dramatists are admirable though very partial exponents. They are, they have to be, men of the world, and their vocation, as their success, lies in their aptitude to reproduce the gestures of the world, what modern parlance terms in a very distorted and restricted sense—life.

What is the characteristic of the life we can see in the most famous works on the modern stage? It is unfortunately too easy to say. The knowledge of the age, its activities, its peculiar courage, its manifold aspirations, are all there, but never as the chief interest; they are only the background or the frame. The centre of interest for the dramatist is at present exclusively love. And let there be no mistake; the love which we see night after night on the Parisian stages has long ceased to be the high feeling productive of noble actions which it was inexhaustibly in medieval literature; it is a passion, all violence and selfishness, possessing its victims so entirely that we can never know

anything about her or him, through four or five acts, except that he or she is on the verge of insanity.

Here it is evident that dramatic literature is not only the picture of life, but one of its factors. The drama combines with modern art, modern music, and practically every materialisation of modern sensibility, to make a daily and all-the-year-round phenomenon of what nature had intended as a transient condition. It is not in vain that all we hear and see conjures up the same ideas; given a state of society in which idleness and eternal self-analysis are the rule with leisured people, these people must exasperate the string on which they are for ever harping. This, in fact, is the result which we see attained in all artificial lives, whether real or imaginary; one consciousness dominates all the others, and it is the sexual one.

This being the case, it is not surprising that what used to be called the storms of passion, the gathering violence of love, its crises—jealous or others—its sudden ending, have vanished from attention. When the curtain rises on a play of M. de Porto-Riche, M. Bataille, M. Bernstein, or any of their numerous imitators, we know that the heroine will be at least in the condition of the Phèdre of Racine, and we have no illusion as to what we may expect. No chance of any

deep-running passion which might be everlasting, but might also be mute. *Febris est libido nostra.* The Didos we see may easily commit suicide if they are given up by their loves—nothing in their state of mind is more likely; but if their love dies, a strong instinct tells us that they will soon marry again.

M. Georges Riche—generally known as de Porto-Riche—was the initiator of the drama based on this kind of passion. He is no benefactor of mankind, to be sure, but he ought not to be classed along with the common corrupters whose sole object is success. His latest play, *Le Vieil Homme*, performed in March 1911, brought forth enthusiastic praise, which such a glaringly immoral piece did not deserve, but also a storm of abuse, which the author did not deserve either. M. de Porto-Riche is a true artist. He has begun as a poet, and nobody is more fastidious about his workmanship than he is. His enemies make fun of his everlasting delays in the production of his pieces, but artistic scrupulousness is so rare nowadays that it ought to be encouraged and not laughed at. Certainly M. de Porto-Riche came, in one of his plays, *Amoureuse*, very near the perfection, not of Racine, as some people will say, but of Marivaux. Unfortunately the tact of the man is not so fine as that of the writer. M. de Porto-Riche

has the modern Jew's inevitable propensity towards the doubtfully rare, the unhealthy exceptional, and the sweetness of his honeysuckle is not enough to cover other smells from his mould. The naturalness, vivacity, and wit of his dialogue, the Parisian charm of his women, the poetical atmosphere which he spreads over his creations, will not redeem his fame. When French literature recovers—as another chapter shows that it will—its former healthiness, M. de Porto-Riche will be remembered as the man who managed the first to make conjugal love look impure, and built a whole play, *Le Vieil Homme*, on a painfully equivocal situation summed up in this speech of a wife and mother to her husband: "Your son is in love with your mistress." The sadness which fills those brilliant, sparkling plays, the idea that love brings a special Nemesis along with it, is not enough to make them moral. The morality one would be apt to gain from a prolonged familiarity with these works is pure nihilism: get as much out of life as it can possibly give you, and when it has nothing left to tempt you, turn your back upon it.

M. Bataille and M. Henry Bernstein are the immediate disciples of M. de Porto-Riche; they have his belief in the fatalism of passion, his cynicism—I translate the word fearlessness generally used—in taking it for granted, and

his dangerous tenderness in watching its effects; but M. Bataille is even more refined than his master in the notation of subtle corruption; and M. Bernstein has rapidly made a reputation for his capacity in imagining and handling harrowing scenes of violence. M. Bataille is the historian of the women of forty who fall in love with the school friends of their son, aged nineteen; or of the ageing courtesans whose sons, hearing that they are on the eve of being given up by their protector, suddenly appear on the scene and frighten the truant into loyalty by means perfectly impossible to tell. M. Bernstein makes studies from the same kennel, but his low heroes are always on the point of committing suicide, or of being irreparably disgraced, or of having with their parents horrible scenes in which they dare and insult them. You go out of these spectacles with well-nigh shattered nerves, but that is exactly the sensation which some people are in quest of.

Needless to say that there is no trace whatever of moral beauty in these plays. It seems to be one of the most recognised dramatic principles of the day that true nobleness of life or feeling does not exist, or exists so exceptionally as to be totally unconvincing on the stage. Stupidity —invariably relieved by the author's own wit —hypocrisy, falseness, selfishness, and cruelty

in every form are the staple of what is called Le Théâtre Rosse; that is to say, the deliberate expression—occasionally heard even at the Comédie Française—of the basest tendencies in the human soul. The dark corners which the classic writers did not ignore, but to which they barely alluded, are emptied out in the full blaze of the lights. M. Abel Hermant with icy-cold bitterness, M. Courteline with a curious admixture of good-nature and irony, are the chief representatives of this heartless satire.

As a contrast we find the plays of M. Lavedan and M. Donnay, which probably picture best the aspects of society on which modern drama seems mostly to live, and the philosophy with which our contemporaries generally regard them.

M. Lavedan and M. Donnay are the painters of idle high life, and as such they are the lineal successors of a woman on whom a considerable portion of this light literature depends, Madame de Martel, better known as Gyp. The characters we see in their plays, as in Gyp's dialogues and novels, are mostly butterflies, with not enough consistency to be capable of real wickedness, but butterflies that had lived in the vicinity of a colony of much coarser beings and caught their language. When we try to remember the flimsy, brilliant creatures which fill those hundreds of volumes, numerous as they are, we only see a

few types always the same : the man of prey who brings all his energies to bear on the one object, viz. please himself in everything; younger men whom he trains for the same career or occasionally fleeces mercilessly and smilingly; mere boys who are already so tired of the game that they speak like old men with perfect naturalness; old men who are punished, in Joubert's phrase, "for loving women too much by loving them too long," and cry over their lost pleasures like disappointed boys; women risen from nothing into the semblance of something, viewing life sometimes with the rapacity, sometimes with the recklessness, of the people, and perfectly destitute of moral sense. Whether we think of *Le Nouveau Jeu*, or *Le Vieux Marcheur*, or *Le Marquis de Priola*, or *Education de Prince*, or even *Amants*, it is the same thing, and one's ears are full of Folly's bells. The scenes we remember are those on which the curtain rises in nine out of ten plays, till we are sick of them—suppers at Montmartre, very unhealthy seaside places, suspicious boudoirs. The philosophy is always the same, too, complete cynicism so reckless that it ends by turning against itself and sounding like sincerity. As to the language which those flitting shadows speak, it is worthy of them : assisted by professional word-handlers—writers and artists —they have created a peculiar dialect which is

better than a slang, both coarse and elegant, blending Maupassant with Marivaux, searching, accurate, subtle, winged, and elusive, and yet worse than cynical, full of quick allusion, ungrammatical, punning, and cheap, but as picturesque as medieval French.

The true influence of the plays written after these models lies less in the contagiousness of the characters—perfectly inimitable for whoever is not both young and rich—than in this remarkable quality of their language. As I said above, writers copy it, but they improve it, and thousands of Parisians or would-be Parisians do in the theatre what M. Lavedan does in the various milieus he haunts; they take careful note of what phrases strike them as likely to astonish or dazzle the uninitiated, and they retail them to their friends. The pity is that this means attitudinising, and a pose of this kind entails the very easy imitation of the sentiments it presupposes. Most of the so-called Parisian corruption is only a varnish of words on the thinnest veneer of materialism, but many people are too weak, when once they have learnt imitation, to be themselves ever again, and it takes a new current of opinion to sweep the puppets out of the way.

The difference between M. Lavedan and M. Donnay is very slight. The former has evident contempt for his paltry heroes; scorn is diffused

through all his books, even those in which he has no chance of moralising; and his play, *Le Duel*, as well as a great portion of his non-dramatic productions, shows that his philosophy differs widely from that of his models. But he is not free from a certain subtle weakness which causes him to affect excessive indulgence, and has recently decoyed him into writing a frankly immoral comedy, *Le Goût du Vice*, when he wanted to satirise modern laxity.

M. Donnay has the same indulgence, rendered more dangerous by the charm he gives to his women, and by an evident propensity towards moral anarchism from which M. Lavedan is free. He has lived too early in the near vicinity of the mad set he describes not to find it impossible to shake off all that he has caught from them. Yet he has his philosophy too: the gentle melancholy inevitably found in epicures. Life is fascinating, love is intoxicating, but life and love are fleeting and leave sadness behind them. The heroes of M. Bernstein disappear with the bitterness of hatred and disappointment in them; those of M. Donnay survive with a taste of soured honey for ever in their mouths. This too is copied by thousands of poetic snobs, and many a retired coquette who sighs distinguished epicurean stoicism behind her fan only recites bits from Donnay.

The characteristic of the plays of M. Lavedan,

M. Donnay, and, I ought to add, M. Capus—whose optimism and good humour are a clever counterfeit of real health—is the contrast between the ready wit of the characters in them and their invariable moral mediocrity. Most of these people would be charming after-dinner companions, none could make a real mate in life. As to their creators themselves, superior as we realise they are to their puppets, they are too eclectic in their sympathies, too ready to see the pros and cons even in moral difficulties in which a healthily trained mind would see only one course, too superficially intelligent, in short, to be of much use for whoever seeks more than the amusement of an evening. Even the best of us want more than a knowing shrug of the shoulders or winking of the eye to be held above the low waters of modern society.

Are there then no theatres where we can find "people we would like to resemble?" Yes, but they are few. For years the historical plays which will never cease to appeal to the eye and the soul reminded us that the theatres used to be the home of heroic sentiments. Plays like *La Fille de Roland*, by Gaston de Bornier, were far more effective morally than the best-constructed *pièces à thèses*. A great deal of even Sardou's reconstitutions had a value of the same kind; and if M. Rostand had chosen to draw on that

vein which was so rich in him rather than on his imagination, he had an undoubted gift for expressing the peculiar quality of French courage. Nobody could see dramas from the braver epochs of our national history without being conscious of present inferiority. But even the historical play has gradually been tainted by the cankering materialism which literature calls realism. The tendency is to treat it not as a drama, but as an anecdote—very much in the tone of M. Lenôtre's fascinating books, and the results are not always good. If you asked M. d'Annunzio why he made an immoral work of the story of Saint Sebastian, he would no doubt tell you that it was out of respect for truth.

Between the drama proper and the play with a purpose there is room for another kind of play working at the same time on the brain and the heart of the spectator, which, in default of a better word, one can call the idealist play, the development of a high idea or a noble feeling. It is remarkable that in this age of scepticism and hardly-disguised selfishness these echoes of the teaching of old are enthusiastically welcomed, not only by the critics, but even by average audiences. M. Lavedan's greatest success was undoubtedly *Le Duel*, which stands out among his works as a fine old residence sometimes appears among tinsel seaside villas; it is the story of

a priest, once a man of the world, who kills the last germs of self-love in himself. The dramatic work which caused most sensation in the last few years was an awkwardly-built but highly-thought and nobly-written drama, *Les Affranchis*, by Mademoiselle Lenéru. This play, from the technical point of view, was rather poor, and if we lived at an epoch in which moral greatness were not considered a literary fault, it would have taken the second or third rank, but in these barren days of realism it appeared as a piece of platonic beauty. The critics spoke of it with exceptional respect, which in itself would have been significant enough, but this was not all; the play was one of those which M. Antoine used to produce at the Odéon "out of sympathy for young dramatists"—that is to say, in plainer language, because he was paid to be charitable for unknown talents—and it was to be performed only once, or at most twice; in fact, it had to be given over and over again, and before a month was gone, it had found its way into the regular repertory. Clearly the inspiration of an inexperienced artist had joined a reaction of the public taste at the right moment.

But the already-established and still growing fame of another independent playwright ought to have long pointed out to dramatic writers that modern audiences have a surfeit of love,

or even of brilliantly-varnished realism, and crave something else. It is nearly twenty years since the admiration of all competent judges and the surprised enthusiasm of the public for two plays, entitled *L'Envers d'une Sainte* and *Les Fossiles*, made the name of M. François de Curel known and deeply respected. The example of this pre-eminently honest writer could be proposed to the most ambitious as well as to the most sincere. A descendant of an ancient Lorrain family, he might have lived a luxurious life, but he chose to follow the career—very far from smooth in France—of an engineer. Endowed with powerful dramatic faculties, he might have achieved highly popular success; he courted supreme distinction. He always chose the narrow way in everything. He lives mostly in the country, in his native district, dreaming his dreams, waiting for real inspiration, indefatigably writing and rewriting his works without any attention to outward suggestions. The result is first of all a private life eloquent in itself, and in the second place a literary production which is not faultless but which compels admiration.

The faults of M. de Curel are intimately connected with his qualities. He bears his creations so long in his mind that they all ultimately borrow something of his ways of thinking and ex-

pressing himself; their language is not by any means bombastic, but its simplicity could be attained only by exceedingly refined, intelligent, and noble recluses who spent their lives in meditation and only spoke on great occasions. It has something rhetorical in its spirit, as there is oratory in the general expression of the plays themselves. This may be part of the peculiar power of the dramatist, but it requires a certain co-operation from the spectator which the latter is not always disposed to give.

However, the necessary harmony between the author and his audience once established, M. de Curel's plays appear as rare productions in which we discover under every sentence the presence of a poet, a psychologist, and a philosopher, master of a singularly noble expression and an aristocrat in the true meaning of the phrase. M. de Curel is as incapable of imagining a low character and a common plot as others may be incapable of the reverse. His natural bent is towards heroism. A brief sketch of one of his best-known works, *Les Fossiles*, will give an idea of his manner. The scene is an old château, in which an ancient family is slowly dying away with only the pride of its name to give it courage. The head of the family, the old Duke of Chantemelle, and his son Robert, spend their lives in their woods, hunting or brooding, and perfectly un-

sociable. The duchess and her daughter Claire visit the poor and pray. The all-absorbing thought for all of them is that there was unequalled dignity in the greatness of their name, and the cankering anxiety is the fear that the name is on the eve of disappearing for ever, for Robert is threatened with consumption. One day Robert tells his mother that before his end comes he would like to see once more the governess of his sister, a poor girl whom the duchess has turned out because she suspected her husband to be unduly attentive to her. The young man soon confesses that he has had a child by the unfortunate governess. He will never marry the mother, but he thinks of her baby with the anxiety of imminent death. When the duke hears all this his first impulse is furious anger, for he has really been in love with Hélène Vatrin himself. But gradually he calms himself; a thought has dawned upon him: the lost hope of a descendant, here it is revived. Let Robert marry Hélène and the name of Chantemelle will not die out. "I thought of it," answers Robert, "but if Hélène comes here she must be the equal of all." In turn, the old duke, the duchess, and the pure and proud Claire accept the sacrifice. But Hélène is no common woman, and her own pride has to be conquered too. When it is, and she is the wife of Robert, peace seems to inhabit at

last the villa near the Mediterranean where the family have come to try and save Robert's life. But the nurse of Robert's child, an abominable woman, who knows the story of the old duke's relations with Hélène, tells Robert the awful truth. The latter receives the revelation calmly. He does not care for life now that his aim has been attained. He travels north with the certainty and the hope—soon fulfilled—of dying, and the play ends with the reading of his will, a page of quiet sublimity.

M. de Curel has not always been so successful as in this play. Only once, in the *Repas du Lion*, has he hit on a plot capable of this full development, but all his pieces are conceived in the same spirit and written with the same elevation. His place among French dramatists is curious. If you ask any ordinary playgoer who are his favourites, he will seldom mention him, but if you ask him where he places the author of *Les Fossiles*, he will often unhesitatingly give him the first rank. The fact is that our minds are inevitably influenced by the immense number of dramas written to amuse, but it is also true that the streak to which M. de Curel's production corresponds is large enough to be regarded as a feature of the public mind tired at last of mere froth and elegant corruption.

What is the impression left by a comparatively

extensive study of the modern French stage and of the chief French dramatists followed not only in their plays, but in all the expressions of their philosophy? Can we find a formula that will enable us to bring order into the somewhat intricate statements we have made? Is there not, first of all, uppermost in our minds, and difficult to dispel, the sensation that modern dramatic production in France is, in spite of a few exceptions, a tremendous factor of public demoralisation?

Certainly, forty-nine in fifty Parisian plays are more or less overtly immoral. The individualism which has been turned loose at the great Revolution, and has almost uninterruptedly gained in the literary realm even more than elsewhere, is rampant on the stage. The fact is that duty is less dramatic—I only mean that it is less easy to dramatise—than passion, and unbridled creatures are more eloquent than sober men and women accustomed to self-denial and to habitual suppression of inordinate sentiments. The consequence is that anarchism is frequent and that no excuses are given for its appearance. Nay, dozens of so-called disciples of Ibsen still go on reasoning about the most vital issues and place in the mouths of the characters they invent radical utterances about the destruction of religion, society, and even family. But all this

radicalism is only the cant of the stage, and, in spite of all their apparent boldness, the successors of Alexandre Dumas are, as I have said, more anxious than ever to retain their claims to the title of guides of the modern conscience. Summer after summer, when invited by respectable journalists to decide about the great issues of the day, they deliver themselves of distinctly conservative opinions. They are guarded and timid, the moment they swerve from the beaten track, and, on the contrary, decisive and resolute when they find themselves on traditional ground. This is the contradiction in playwrights.

The same is found in the immense majority of playgoers. They seem to favour vice—for they will taboo no spectacle, and too often they give their wives the same liberty—but they openly blame, on leaving the theatre, what they have been so anxious not to miss. It is the paradoxical disposition which M. Lavedan intended to impugn in his *Goût du Vice*.

What are we to infer? That there are in the air two long-familiar tendencies, one of which is of the flesh while the other is of the spirit. Modern people have become used to over-exciting food, and though a constantly better enlightened instinct warns them more loudly against the danger of anarchical doctrines, they cannot wean themselves from the sights and language which

subtle corruption and ever-increasing talent have made fashionable. Both writers and public are living a fallacy.

The immediate conclusion we must draw is that the theatre does not mirror the city, and that the play is not painted after the audience. The theatre is something eminently artificial. Whatever playwrights might say or imply, they know that they work outside real life. The play is an after-dinner affair, never included in the concerns of the serious hours, attended by people who wear a special garb, bring in special dispositions, expect a special light, and would be —in fact are every now and then—considerably startled when they meet something more like the morning light and morning thoughts, as in the plays of M. de Curel. It is agreed on all sides that the theatre, just like the music-hall, is a concession made by seriousness to folly. The most successful plays are none of those I have named for their literary or philosophical excellence; they are mere pieces of extravagant drollery, like *Papa* or the *Mariage de Mademoiselle Beulemans*, with which neither morals, nor philosophy, nor art in the higher sense of the word, have anything to do. A great deal of the language of an epoch is manufactured on the stage by clever artisans in phrases—not essentially different in this from the higher class of tailors—

but its ideas come from deeper sources—economics and politics to be named first—which the novel, literary criticism, and the multiform newspaper article handle and begin to formulate long before the theatre takes note of their histrionic value and gives them its apparently vivid but in fact flimsy reality. The destructive plays we have reviewed in this chapter are manifestations of a belated stage of French opinion and of artificial appearances. The state of mind at present in the making would be found in the evolution of a typical Frenchman like M. Jules Lemaître, or in that of M. Barrès, and in the literature of their disciples. It means a striking advance in the direction of seriousness, a mistrust of wit for wit's sake, as well as of the empty formulæ that the past generation delighted in, an anxiety about the morrow made of selfishness, to be sure, but including a recognition of solidarity and an accompanying responsibility; above all, it means a sense of the real which we seemed to have lost and which the rising generation possesses to a refreshing exaggeration; for a time comes when narrow-mindedness and stubbornness appear refreshing compared to cheap scepticism. Of this change the stage shows no traces yet, though literature has noticed it for several years. If the reader should wish to realise the gulf between the theatre and life he would have only to read

a little book, *Mon Filleul*, published by M. Lavedan just as he produced *Le Goût du Vice*. The contrast is extraordinary. There is more wit in the play than in the book, but this is not the question. M. Lavedan is a very good Frenchman and, I might say, a very good man—though somewhat ashamed of it—and in both the book and the play there is a moral inspiration, a desire of improving the times. But, as I said above, *Le Goût du Vice* was a signal failure, stage necessities making it imperative for M. Lavedan to be light and affect immorality when intending to preach seriousness and morals, while *Mon Filleul* is highly persuasive. Yet in *Le Goût du Vice*, as well as in *Mon Filleul*, the author wanted to present, and, in fact, did present, modern types. But the characters in the play are evening Parisians who could only be artificial, superficial, and bubbling, while those in the book are a very tolerably real godfather and godson talking about the subjects of the day in the language of the day.

8. *The Rising Generation.*

It is generally admitted that the change in the national spirit brought about by the Tangier awakening is more visible in the rising generation —the men between eighteen and twenty-five—

than in its predecessor, and some people maintain that this change is so marked that it amounts to a modification in the traditional temperament of the French. We shall investigate the change and discuss the so-called modification.

First of all, is there really a contrast between the generation which came to manhood towards 1870 and its offspring? Yes, undoubtedly; but so much has been written on this contrast that a great deal that is born of words has already taken the place of plain truth, and one feels on one's guard.

To begin with the doomed period, the much despised last decade of the nineteenth century, it is too often judged from the celebrated preface to *Le Disciple*, in which Bourget, in 1889, divided contemporary youth into two sections: one consisting of the brutally cynical, and the other of refined if enervated nihilists. This preface is an estimable piece of rhetoric, but it is rhetorical from beginning to end, and, as is invariably the case with unduly successful rhetoric, it has begotten an immense progeny of mere words. It is true that there were brutal cynics and dainty Revolutionists among the young men of those days, but were they a majority? Is it not better to say that they represented that portion of young Frenchmen who, being either professional writers or abstractions from contemporary novels

—those of Daudet, for instance—were, above all, literary matter?

It has been the pleasant lot of the present writer to see a great deal of French youth from the year 1890. These young men were mostly fervid and enthusiastic, as fortunately young men will be. We did see some specimens of effete aristocracy or wealth, we occasionally heard brutal assertions concerning the use of life, and I knew two perfect samples of the pretty affectation which was then called Buddhism and turned a boy of twenty-two into a sort of indulgent old man; but these were exceptions. The fact is that there was no object for popular passion, no definite ideal of any kind. Politics ran high, but they were hardly ever taken seriously, and a young man might spend the time between his leaving school at eighteen and his marrying at twenty-five without encountering any subject that really appealed to him. Some few individuals owed to their surroundings an interest in the campaigns of Drumont against the Jewish power, or of Barrès against Parliamentary corruption, or —this was my case—in the evolution of the Church towards acceptance of modern conditions, and the *ralliement* advocated by Leo the Thirteenth; but they were very few, and the truth is that universal stagnation prevailed.

Consequently, we may say that personal ex-

perience, even in the case of a man connected all his life with intellectual *milieus* and intelligent young men, provides us with very few positive data, and on the contrary with a great deal that is purely negative. So it was mostly through books and magazines, through the innumerable manifestoes which esthetic or ethical "schools" issued so freely, through inferences, in a word, from literary evidence, that we gathered anything about the restricted Parisian circles which are frequently offered us to-day as having given its tone to that period.

Tolstoism was purely literary, and so was Buddhism, and no less so the Nietzscheism which appeared in the early works of Barrès, and the Socialism which we discover rather retrospectively in the books of Péguy. The cynicism of which Bourget complains did exist, no doubt, but in many cases it was created more than represented by the theatre, and thus was literary too. Young men were restless in default of something really mastering to give themselves to, and they tried all that came within reach without much conviction. We have heard many times that for several years Jaurès had great influence over the students at the Ecole Normale, and we find in fact that two or three of them found their way behind him into the Chamber and a few others into the Press. But read the recollections of

Péguy to which I referred above, you will feel immediately that the so-called Socialist wave was limited to the delight of a few lads in being distinguished by a famous orator, and magnified by the same delight in an unconscionable manner. As much might be said of the influence of Paul Desjardins, or of Barrès in his first years, or of many a man who seemed to be a man at the time—for instance, Ernest Lajeunesse—and is at present hardly a name.

The average young men of the declining nineteenth century, therefore, were mostly what their fathers' conversation and the tone of the age made them. Scientism ruling, they were far from all belief, but not averse to a vague mysticism; Renan having been the great admiration of the generation before them, they affected a distinguished dilettantism, or a distinguished scepticism, or a distinguished nihilism—even Jules Lemaître knew these affectations; peace seeming settled, they had a great contempt for war, and were above barbarism and Revanche; they were incredibly jealous of their liberty, but this was chiefly talk, as they consented readily enough to become officials, with no other liberty than that of shirking their work. In short, they were the products of a time in which nothing decisive was taking place, either in man's thought or in his life: they had vague ideals, vague ideas, and

a vague though frequently expressed disgust of it all, which sounded more like cynicism than surfeit, but was in reality surfeit.

Against this description we should now place the portrait of the contemporary young man. It ought to be easily drawn as the model is before our eyes, but we are confronted with the same difficulty which stood in our way with respect to the foregoing generation: too much has been written already, too much is affirmed because it sounds logical, and we have to sift and criticise once more. In the course of the years 1912 and 1913 the newspapers and magazines were full of this Dauphin, the modern young man. Elderly gentlemen interviewed him day after day with that respectful eagerness which gives a somewhat silly appearance even to some letters written by Taine when the Dauphin was called Bourget; and the answers poured, decisive and confident, rather systematic too, with a dash of philosophy thrown over the facts. Many an interested reader must have concluded, as did M. Faguet in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*: yes, they are very well, but, by Jove, they are not modest. The fact is, they generally talk as if they were the masterpiece of their own hands.

Of course, they are only the sons of their fathers, born under happier—morally—circumstances, and enjoying the privilege which belongs

to all happily born sons, of having no doubts about themselves.

They certainly are sensible. You never hear them launch into fine speeches about the vague ideals which triumphed with the Dreyfusists. They are guarded and reserved in the presence of theories, they insist on being given chapter and verse about everything, and you see them boldly do a thing which was considered uneducated and almost ill-bred in 1895—viz. foresee consequences. They also have sober ideas about the rights of man, those rights of man the mention of which was formerly enough to throw down every barrier to individual freedom. They stand for duties and discipline. They take no nonsense from Socialism, and the tendency is so universal that you find it among the younger Syndicalists themselves. They respect the police, and despise indulgent jurymen; in short, they are a great deal more reasonable than their own fathers, and Ludovic Halévy—the author of *La Famille Cardinal*, it is true—when he said that he stood rather in awe of his sons, was only a little way in advance of the times.

But if you analyse the environment and circumstances in which this phenomenon took place, you will find that the fathers and tutors of these young men are largely responsible for it.

No lad of eighteen ever took up the cudgels

for wisdom, order, restraint, and generally the soberer virtues, unless he was made to love them, and it takes considerable eloquence to make him love them. But there seldom were more eloquent people than the fathers of these young fellows, because they were not only sincere but pathetic, and to a certain extent comical in their disappointments. If they had not so heartily believed in Liberty they would not have been so heartily tired of seeing Liberty never result in liberties. If they had not listened with complaisance to the florid speeches of Jaurès and his compeers they would have been less irresistible when they at last broke out into the "words, words, words" of perfect disgust. Perhaps if they had not been deluged with so much filthy literature they would not have had such a surfeit of it. As it was, they spoke with an admixture of surprise and discontent which a boy will invariably construe as akin to *naïveté* and esteem in consequence. Certainly there is a shade of contempt in the appreciation of the last years of the nineteenth century by the men who are now twenty-five, because they could not but feel certitudes where they saw their fathers only arrive at inferences.

In the same way it took either genius or the best kind of Catholic education to resist the influence of Taine, or, above all, Renan, in the

'nineties, because determinism and scepticism were positively in the air. The vogue of a doctrine acts as a physical law. To-day our young men find that scientism is effete, determinism coarse, and scepticism provincial. They find that the fashionable philosophy taught by a non-Christian—there is something amiss in calling M. Bergson a Jew—adopted on all hands, and just enough contradicted by theologians not to appear immediately religious, is a vindication of spiritualism and free will, and indirectly a demonstration of a divine power; it is inevitable that they should be without effort all that was most difficult thirty years ago.

Again, it is true that French education is still exaggeratedly literary; and that, judging by the plans and methods recommended, often too by actual practice, it would seem as if every French boy were destined for the career of a writer, often of a playwright, or at least of a dramatic critic. But professors have changed all the same. They are no longer those whom Bourget knew in the Paris *lycées*, who never said a word to their boys outside the class, and during class never said a word that did not concern literature, and more or less overtly the literature of the day. The fallacy which placed true greatness exclusively in the power of feeling or imagining and expression is rapidly making way for something

more broadly human and manful. The professors of to-day have not yet become what different conditions caused the professors of the seventeenth century to be: men who used the classics as a means and not an end, in the absolute certainty that neither themselves nor, above all, their pupils, had one chance in ten thousand of ever printing a line. They still write a great deal, and the enormous amount of printed matter accumulating outside the school walls weighs upon their imagination and reacts on their speech, but they have served their time in the army and remember it with pleasure, and few are those who do not honestly realise that being comes before writing. The notion of a man as an intelligent will rather than a longing fantasy once more becomes familiar and banishes the opposite monstrosity.

All this being the atmosphere we breathe and take in quite naturally cannot but have results, and the "contemporary young man," if he is not all that he thinks and says of himself, is at least no fiction.

As I said above, he is somewhat positive and trenchant about principles, and is seldom decoyed into a discussion of the bases of individual or even social ethics. It seems as if in this respect the experience of his father had actually passed into his blood, as if he remembered the endless

debates of twenty-five years ago, and had made up his mind that he has had quite enough. The purely academic attitude is a very rare exception, which however I met with some time ago. It was at the house of an engineer whose name was mentioned at the time of the Dreyfus Affair. A young professor of philosophy was there, a good-looking, smartly dressed man of twenty-eight, with an eager and yet cold expression, which I could not at first make out. It was only as the conversation became more animated that I saw where the eagerness tended. This young philosopher was full of doubts, which is certainly not amiss in a philosopher, but he was dying to play them off, and gradually did so with an imperfectly disguised satisfaction which was very unpleasant in itself: in religion and morals, as well as politics, there was nothing he would not question. The sons of our host—three young men between eighteen and twenty-four—sturdy, whole-souled fellows, instantly fired up, not once deigning to discuss his arguments, which would not have been very difficult, but constantly reverting to the fact that these hair-splittings were all very well in a room where nothing was going on except cigarette-smoking, but were worse than useless in the street. The difference in the point of view was vital, and the young philosopher looked curiously anachronistic.

It is not surprising that the verbiage of mere politicians should be treated with contempt by the rising generation. The politician is regarded as not only intellectually but morally inferior, a man who drives a profitable though disreputable trade, and covers his dealings with patriotic pretences. Even a Gambetta would be impossible to-day unless he preached exactly the reverse of Gambetta's doctrine—that is to say, did not see remedies in the success of a party. Young men no longer go to political meetings with no other immediate object than the return of a deputy: the very idea is enough to move either their laughter or their anger. The consequence is that political divisions among them are immaterial compared with what they were in 1880. If Déroulède had died then, his funeral, instead of being attended by a hundred thousand men so united in the great patriotic idea that not one jarring cry was heard, would have been a riotous scene. If General Picquart had died before 1906 we should not have seen what took place at St. Cyr on the occasion of his funeral: permission granted to the nine hundred cadets to attend the ceremony independently if they pleased, and not one taking advantage of it, because doing so would have looked like a decidedly political demonstration.

The purely patriotic feeling has almost iun-

versally replaced political tendencies, and it is at present at least jealous and sensitive. The Sorbonne professors, having under the influence of M. Monod, and especially in the exaltation which accompanied the Dreyfus Affair, been unduly indulgent to Internationalism and insistently partial for German methods, are far from popular with their audiences. Men like MM. Aulard, Seignobos, V. Basch, and Andler, who a few years ago found no contradiction, are frequently spoken of now as shamefaced Frenchmen, taken to task for their shortsighted erudition, and, which is worse, made to look as the representatives of a dead and not very honourable past. Students are still fond of going abroad, and, in fact, almost a majority of them manage to spend a year or two at some foreign university. But what a contrast between the impressions they publish and those of their seniors! The latter either wrote in the cold impersonal spirit of Taine or in that of Loti, at best in that of Bourget's *Sensations d'Oxford.* All that rose in these productions above mere poetic dilettantism was a regret of some opportunity missed in France and envied where the writer found it. The point of view was invariably individualistic, and is apt to-day to look selfish or childish. The travelling impressions of students nowadays are still picturesque, but they would be ashamed of being nothing

else, and in most cases they might be written not by men with a literary training and object, but by diplomatic or consular agents constantly bearing in mind the patriotic point of view or the European relation of France. Stendhal is much nearer these wideawake inquirers than Gobineau, and the German tendencies of the latter are probably responsible for the neglect in which he is already left.

It is not surprising, and I ought hardly to mention, that the Tangier shock should have been felt more by young men than by anybody else. I have said elsewhere how it affected even the working classes, and it is remarkable that the impulse which was then given has not lost any of its energy. Interview, if you have a chance, a private soldier: you will find not only that he accepts the prospect of serving three years without repining, but takes a keen interest in the progress of the twenty-year-old recruits who joined his regiment at the end of 1913: he evidently has thought much of war as a practical possibility and is preoccupied with it.

Matter-of-fact and business-loving as the richer classes have become, they gladly take on the military charges. You never hear the impatient jests of former days about the absurdity and uselessness of much that is done in the barracks. The great object ennobles all the mean details.

There was something almost pitiful in a letter of Bernstein, the dramatist, admitting two or three years ago that he had not seen at twenty the greatness of military servitude as he saw it now. A young man like Lieutenant Ernest Psichari, the grandson of Renan, giving up his career and exchanging his prospects for the life of a private in an African regiment, would have seemed a brainless madcap at the end of the nineteenth century: to-day he is a typical Frenchman.

Even schoolboys have felt the universal influence and show it in their simple way. It seems yesterday that the present writer knew a boy of seventeen, the son of French parents, but brought up in America, who used to shake his head in polite disapproval whenever war was mentioned, and only excited amusement among the other boys. To-day he would be hooted, or, more probably, speedily converted. When the possibility of a war is mentioned all professors notice those signs of interest about which an experienced man is never mistaken.

All this is clear enough and certain enough. Owing to the experiences and disappointments of past years the Frenchman of to-morrow will be what the French have been throughout their history, excepting a short period evidently partaking of the nature of a disease, neither afraid of nor philosophically antagonistic to war, and

probably inclined to it. A great deal that is said about this subject by men who are *not* young sounds rather boastful and bombastic, but it is only because they are not young. The same things said by their sons seem natural. These carry about with them a changed atmosphere.

It is difficult to be as affirmative on a few other points which have been frequently discussed recently. MM. Tarde and Massis in their book, *Les Jeunes Gens d'Aujourd'hui*, say that the rising generation is purer and more moral than its predecessors. It certainly stands a better chance, for literature is infinitely less salacious than it used to be, philosophy is no longer a dissolvent, and the tone of conversation is improved: the insistence upon *gauloiserie*, which was the rule since the empty brilliant days of the Second Empire, is now bad form, and that perfectly Parisian type the *fanfaron de vice* looks provincial even in the country. But we have to be content with those appearances, which after all have generally been supposed to mirror with comparative accuracy the real state of affairs, and possibly with the fact that young men have a tendency to marry earlier than was customary, as appears from University and Army statistics.

The same ought to be said of the religious inclination of young men. There is no positive

evidence that they are better Catholics than their seniors, but they are hardly ever anticlerical, and their philosophy leads to rather than from a religious life. Here again we are conscious of an atmosphere which is not of yesterday, and the superiority of our young men lies in their finding it ready instead of having to create it. Perhaps if the foregoing generation had not had the unpleasant experience of blighting unbelief, or had not painfully groped its way out of the vague religiousness associated with the name of Tolstoy, the field would appear less open for Catholic influences than it is at present. But perhaps again the conditions we see, being the fruits of disgust rather than of faith, may amount only to a sort of neutral good-will with a great deal of the notion—widely spread after the Revolution and after 1898—that religion is indispensable for a nation, but individuals need only be generally favourable to it. This view usually results in the establishment of apparently strong ecclesiastical institutions apt to deceive the clergy about dangerous undercurrents, and only effective if they help and not replace proselytising.

The last characteristic of the contemporary young man is his taste for action. Here so much perplexing nonsense is heard and repeated that we must proceed carefully and light up our path with useful distinctions. All the young men

whom MM. Tarde and Massis have interviewed declare that they are tired of theories and talk, and that if they have to go to school in order to live, it shall be the school of life itself. This sounds very much like theories and talk in disguise, and we are not surprised to see this exalted resolve occasionally supported by the authority of William James, or—more timidly—of Whitman: there is a great deal of mere literature or philosophising in it. Let us give credit for these speeches only to the inborn want of the French to have intellectual systems to rest upon. Now we must ask ourselves what the people who really do something are doing. Is it more, or of a better quality, or accomplished in a higher spirit? M. Gustave le Bon, who is a well-known and deservedly well-known social philosopher, does not think so: modern young men, he says, are all "arrivistes." This is sweeping indeed and seems insufficiently demonstrated. Probably M. Le Bon, who is an idealist, is unpleasantly affected by the fact that the possession of wealth or influence is the apparent object of practically every activity. But this may only be an appearance, or a bequest of the preceding generation, which does not essentially belong to ours. The real question is whether our young men are not impelled toward action by a more or less conscious craving after self-development, and it

seems that the answer ought to be in the affirmative.

The American taste for "doing something," whatever it may be, which M. Demolins proposed more than twenty years ago for our admiration and imitation, certainly is at the root of French activity. Young men still marry heiresses—and commercial and industrial expansion rapidly multiply the number of heiresses—but they would be ashamed to live on their wives' money: they are often seen to go into partnership with their fathers-in-law instead of leaving them to their low avocations. When such chances do not offer they seldom resign themselves to the passivity which used to be the rule; in default of something better they travel, trying to give to their pastimes the appearance of utility. The recently developed literary hobby among the aristocracy, ridiculous in one aspect, proceeds however from the dread of being useless.

The evident progress among women also works in the same direction. Society women who spend their mornings in hospitals qualifying for the Red Cross, girls who take up the classics, or medicine, or the law, as hundreds and thousands do at the present moment, often without any mercenary views, could hardly co-exist with the shameless specimens of laziness that Lavedan, Donnay, and Gyp before them looked upon as

representative in the 'nineties. Energy is in fashion and *veulerie*, as it is called in the most unpleasant syllables in the language, is superannuated.

Another proof of this change is the comparative desertion of Government careers. The official is frequently despised on account of his lack of independence, his indifference to his work, the uneventfulness of his life, and the habit he has of thinking himself the master instead of the servant of the public. This contempt begins to tell. The competition for situations in the great industrial enterprises at one end of the scale and for the big shops at the other is speedily replacing the old struggle after "quiet positions." The number of candidates even for professorships is not half of what it was twenty years ago, and at the last examination for *agrégation* in natural philosophy the jury found just enough competition for a bare application of their rules. All this shows an evident return to the spirit of enterprise which characterised the French quite as much as the English when France and England were the only nations with colonial empires.

Another sure sign of the same reaction is the popularity of sports, and, above all, the consciousness of the qualities developed by sports. Sports used to be regarded in France from two different standpoints. There were the people

who enjoyed open-air exercise, and those who did not care at all. The former would go in for riding, fencing, fives or rackets, but they were quite as ignorant as the latter of that reasoned pleasure in them which is characteristic of the modern practice of sports. A man might fence or play tennis every day of his life, and not take the least interest in a boxing match, which to him would only be a circus performance. Sport was first of all exercise, then an art, and then to a certain extent rivalry, but the latter was in as small a proportion as can be conceived. To-day the numberless boys whom you see in the streets kicking a small ball according to mysterious rules, or in the suburbs of towns playing Rugby as scientifically as they can, certainly enjoy the physical sensation of the game, and the excitement of it, but they seem above all to delight in doing it because a certain difficulty is attached to doing it to perfection. Their pleasure is quite similar to that which their fathers used to take in being drilled at the imminent risk of being punished. Sportiveness is a conviction rather than a taste, and in numberless instances it does duty for religion. There is an effort under it all. The pleasure of obeying in spite of being French is novel and piquant, and is sustained by a certain amount of exaltation, and by the delight of having a vote and a voice in a club. The

absolute spontaneity of the Englishman in the enjoyment of games is here replaced by the consciousness of pleasant self-conquering, and I will show by and by that this feature is probably the most important. At all events, the tendency of sporting young men is a highly self-realised one, involving attention to physical and moral development much more than the impassioned condition one is conscious of in an English or American boxing-ring.

Some people affect to speak of aviation as a kind of sport, and lay great stress on French superiority in it, but the least effort at analysing the airman's state of mind shows that it has nothing in common with that of the sportsman: it is entirely and exclusively an aspect of the old military spirit of the French, and as such is far more significant than any amount of sporting interest. Certainly there is a world between the sages of 1898 and the fascinating specimens of French pluck we see at Buc and Villacoublay.

To conclude, the new generation appears stronger in its instincts, more resolute, and almost stubborn in its ideas than its predecessor, altogether nearer nature and less artificial, in spite of the wisdom it has inherited rather than acquired. In one respect it seems to show an unheard-of development of the national character, and we must now ask ourselves whether

the traditional temperament of the French is really undergoing a change about which we ought to make up our minds, whether it be to accept or counteract it.

9. *Is the New Generation less French?*

This so-called change has been pointed out several times and deplored by friendly foreigners, the best known of whom is Mr. J. E. C. Bodley.[1] To anybody who has known and loved France some fifteen years ago, these writers say, and revisits it at present, the contrast is striking and painful. The idealism for which the French have been famous throughout their history has vanished, so have their broadmindedness and their warmheartedness, and even the gaiety without which they were almost unthinkable. Paris is absurdly overestimated: any foreigner who lives there for any length of time will find it a depressing place with a dull atmosphere. The French are almost universally what they used to be once in rare exceptions—viz. Chauvinists, on their guard against their neighbours, thinking a great deal more of war and revenge than of culture, thinking of money too. They used to be charming conversationalists, but in this also

[1] *Vide* "Decay of Idealism in France," in *Cardinal Manning and Other Essays.* Longmans, 1912.

they have lost; they have replaced the drawing-room by the field, and make unsuccessful efforts to become sportsmen. Seriousness and application are not becoming to them: the strain easily turns to sadness; in fact, they are melancholy.

The great grievance seems to be that the French are less good "Europeans" than they were. Paris was a sort of national park for Europe, not so long ago. Everybody could come there, and not only find a welcome, but even a something yielding which was the subtlest of flatteries; an aptitude to lend oneself to a foreign point of view, to see and point out charm in a visitor, when the visitor himself was not quite conscious of it; a contempt for prejudices, which was unspeakably refreshing after the narrow-mindedness one had left at home; a dash, often a recklessness, which bespoke that wonderful apprehension of things *sub specie æternitatis* which was the fascination of Renan and helped you to realise that there was a philosophy under cosmopolitanism. Now the French are only French, and seem to be that somewhat defiantly: a great falling off!

This impression shows clearly that—owing no doubt to the development of France as a purely intellectual nation which began with the Encyclopædists, was at its fullest in the heyday of Renan's celebrity, but became only thoroughly

conscious of itself in Anatole France's compositions—the French had grown to be in the eyes of leisured Europeans supremely dainty, costly, ingenious toys, but toys all the same, with which it had long ceased to be dangerous to play. France was a wonderful field for experiments of all sorts: literary, moral, religious, political or social, which the natives carried on for the enjoyment of Europe with captivating daring. To what extent the admiration was mixed up with something less sympathetic it is not easy to say, but when its expression was unqualified it was apt to sound unintelligent as much as friendly.

Place beside it the terribly wideawake clear-sightedness of a barbarian of genius like Bismarck, or the outspokenness of a writer with manly instincts like Kipling, the truth flashes upon you at once. The so-called friends of France were as blind as she was herself to the earthly, not metaphysical, consequences of her attitude. They were evil companions, dangerous flatterers, and as in their hearts they could not abstract themselves from worldly considerations, every time France was struck and they could not refrain from thanking Providence for not being born toys, they appeared hypocritical. Uncritical love is apt to find itself in that position.

If it is folly to imagine that a nation can keep its feet steady on the earth with its head

in the clouds, it is ignorance to suppose that France, in the typical periods of her history, was frivolous and delightful, or idealistic and reckless, as the so-called "good Europeans" like her to be. We have every reason to believe that the recent and deplorable development was a literary disease and nothing else. Nations, like individuals, show various reactions, occasionally have moods which do not touch their original character. The classical description of the Gallic disposition, with its two propensities: *rem militarem et argute loqui*, never ceased to apply to the French temperament; but there are times for everything. A hundred and twenty years ago there were probably already in Paris refined circles in which *argute loquentes* slurred their r's and strutted to insufficiently dressed women, but it was lucky that toward the same time armies of ragged men with several very uncivilised notions were guarding the frontier and carrying on *rem militarem* irrespective of rhetoric or philosophy.

Hardly two ages in the succession of French history present the same physiognomy. There is a world between medieval simplicity and the violence of the sixteenth century. The age of Louis the Fourteenth is as different from its successor as a retired diplomat is different from a sprightly young *seigneur* coming back from England full of

M. de Bolingbroke, of theories and persiflage. Sometimes the strong side, sometimes the brilliant side of the national character appears. What we see in history we could have seen in the chess-board of the various classes. Literary people of inferior quality, politicians, worldlings who only live by shining, all the individuals who, after the fashion of the mask-like fairies in Scandinavian mythology, only subsist so long as nobody sees their hollow side, are very different from the millions which form the backbone of the nation. While they talk the French are apt to indulge in all sorts of nonsense, but it is no less true that they distrust mere talk the moment they act. When the great carnival of theories which went on during and immediately after the Dreyfus Affair was the success of the day, one might have supposed that everybody was in it. Yet if you had inquired among the classes which are the true representatives of French activity, the useful—not the butterfly—aristocrat, the *bourgeois* merchant, the peasant, and the soldier would all have given you sound common-sense even on the burning question of the day. Add that Paris may be saying what it pleases to amuse itself and its guests, but all the time it does so, slow-going Flanders and wary Champagne, crafty Normandy and stubborn Brittany, wise Touraine and shrewd Lorraine, astute Provence and solid

Dauphiné, all the cautious old provinces in their castellated fortresses of plain good sense are silent and expectant. The time always comes when these reserves are turned to account.

Frothy Paris—or, I should say, the froth of Paris, for the rue Saint-Denis is decidedly sensible—with its babbling deputies and tattling journalists, its loud theatres and over-subtle lecture-rooms, has been silenced for a time, and whoever realises that France is a greater and better thing than the cosmopolitan *quartier de l'Opéra* ought to rejoice at seeing stronger, if ruder, elements come uppermost just when they are needed. Surely young Frenchmen are not less French for hating humanitarian nonsense and preferring their own country.

It would be absurd to deny the existence of a few ridiculous features in the new generation, which cannot but strike the visitor somewhat unpleasantly. Exaggeration is the fault of all collective impulses.

To begin with, the fashion tends towards gravity, and gravity does not sit well on the average Frenchman. The interest in foreign politics has created a new breed of journalists who enjoy the advantages of being the first of their kind in this country, and magnify their importance accordingly. I have described in another chapter their social attitude: it consists

in silence, silence in all its eloquent meanings, from heroic self-suppression to unquestionable triumph. A council of such mutes in the dining- or smoking-room is irresistible: the Amadan Academy did not come near it. Needless to say that this is copied by fashionable young men who pretend to lunch with Sir Edward Grey and dine with M. Venezelos, and unaffectedly let us admire their thorough mastery over some such question as the Naxos fisheries. The sportsman, too, is a very reticent person. He is afraid of passing for a braggart, and although he merely plays football at Arcueil or even golf at Neuilly, he is as modest as if he were Blériot or Védrines themselves. He, in his turn, is not only imitated but improved upon by that very un-French creation, the boy scout. The boy scout is too young, otherwise he would be clean-shaven; he dresses in khaki, which will never look well in the Meudon woods; he is unduly tall for his age and country, wears enormous boots which he never thinks ugly enough, shows any amount of spindle legs, and apes to perfection the globe-trotting gait of the American artists in the Boulevard Raspail. His chief, a young man of twenty-four, in a sombrero and sober grey, is a cross between a Methodist minister and a New England schoolmaster; I have never seen one whom I could suppose to have been in a line regiment the year before;

I have never met a party of scouts in the train on a Sunday afternoon without a vague fear lest they should demurely rise and solemnly strike up a hymn. With what a regret they make one look back to the lazy dawdling columns of the *lycéens* of old, who had never walked more than four miles when they left school, and thought nothing of twenty the week after they joined a regiment! But it takes no great divining power to prophesy the disappearance of all khaki boys within two years and their absorption into the *sociétés militaires*.

Some foreign observers will have it that it is not only seriousness but sadness and anxiety that are visible in modern Frenchmen. Are they right? Certainly the workman of yore seemed to do his work more cheerfully than he does it to-day, and the tradesmen who retired from their little shop to a house in the *banlieue* thirty years ago seemed to talk more light-heartedly than we hear them now. Syndicalism, machinery, and banks at every corner are no elements of cheerfulness. You feel no inclination to merriment when you contemplate a strike of which your wife strongly disapproves; you do not attempt to sing, even if you are a mason, a carpenter, or a painter, when your every movement is regulated by a noisily puffing steam-crane; and you will look grave behind your counter, even if

pennies pour into your till, when Rubbers go down just after you bought them. Modern civilisation, if civilisation we must call it, is as deadly to simple joy as mere *écus* were to La Fontaine's cobbler. With the multiplication of money one can notice the disappearance of taste. It is obvious in the passion of the Sunday sportsman for gaudy colours: the sight of two teams of motley Neapolitan-looking footballers in the fortifications makes you feel an alien among these young men. And the house of the thriving clerk goes the way of his clothes. The environs of Paris, which were, and still are in many places, so harmonious, are a nightmare in some others. The house which the Parisian *petit bourgeois* fancies stands in a *lotissement*—that is to say, the site of an historical park bought over by a Jewish syndicate and geometrically cut up—it is narrow so as to save space and high-shouldered so as to gain some; it is made of brick or of the hideous yellow *meulière* because it must be cheap, and is exposed in its ugly nudity because creepers are said to be damp, and the creamy or softly pink casts of old are only good for villagers' houses; it has a garden, but no tree, shrub, or hedge is suffered in it because doctors recommend light and the thriving clerk is a born gardener; there it is, looking like a sentry-box in its desolate prison yard. Look out when you

come from Calais for a place called Aulnay, a few miles before you reach Saint-Denis: you will see what the thriving clerk has made, of all places, of the forest of Bondy; or visit Meudon and see what horrors the few magnificent cedars that are left of the Dauphin's park are made to shelter; or visit Ecouen, with its princely château, and see . . . no, do not see anything else. Alas, alas, how much there would be to say about Paris itself! How much has gone down, and how much has gone up, the thought of which is almost unbearable! The municipal councillor is of the same essence as the grocers who elect and, which is worse, pay him, and the architect is as servilely cringing to the Jew as the suburban builder is to his colonies of clerks.

What sort of people live in those houses? What are their ways and deportment? What is their talk? Much is said that is disheartening. These people are mostly the sons of provincial immigrants, people born among the vineyards of Burgundy or the lavender hills of Provence; their fathers had traditions, a peculiar accent, and racy old phrases which conjured up a rich background as they spoke. Sometimes quaintly dressed relations visited them, and often the old woman who waited at their tables had not parted with the headgear of her valley. All this is gone. Modern civilisation razes old ways as it does old houses;

the sons of these new families copy the American lads they see in the rue de Rivoli, their conversation is said to be deliberately heartless and colourless, even the French they speak is emptied of its flavour. It is learned, not in the Place Maubert where Montaigne would linger listening to market women speaking even more picturesquely than he wrote, nor from Molière, or La Fontaine, or the familiar classics, but from the morning paper with its impersonal political language on the first page, and its columns of foreign news on the third, translated from blank international English by a night-clerk often as disarmed before French as he is before English, seeking security in vagueness, and letting the good old French words grow so thin under his drowsy hand that they seem to have floated where they are on the metaphysical waves of the wireless.

All this sounds very like transformation, and transformation for the worse. If young Frenchmen copy foreign fashions, lose the traditional French taste, are practical and money-making, suffer their language to lose flesh and colour, in a word look as modern as Australians, does it not mean that the Iron Age is too strong for any resistance, and that France will not be equal to her vocation ?

First of all, let it be remembered that these

appearances have nothing to say to the two chief characteristics of contemporary youth in France, which are an instinctive aversion from words and an instinctive appreciation of energy. These seem to be vital, the rest is only appearances. But even these appearances ought to be qualified.

To begin with, it is very likely that they will be ephemeral, because they are the products either of imitation or of transient conditions. The French have always been fond of imitations, which however leave their national temperament as intact as the carnival mask does their face. The two periods in French history which have left the most decidedly brilliant impression upon foreigners are the later part of Louis the Fifteenth's reign and the Second Empire. Now, the smart people whom Walpole visited at Paris and Versailles showed such an Anglomania that he was at first amused, but gradually disgusted; and as to the Second Empire galaxy, it had a—to-day astonishing—partiality for the Prussian aristocrats, who were constantly welcomed at the Tuileries or at Compiègne. Khaki, large boots, clean-shaving, the affectation of self-control, all these fashions will be replaced by others within a decade. Then we ought to make allowance for the social modifications which are invariably attended with exaggeration and effort. In France, as in the

rest of the world, the step onward from peasantry and simplicity produces unpleasant effects: affectation, a display of poor taste, the levelling uniformity. But this step is not the first, and those which came before were not very different. The turbaned old women from the South, whose conversation seems to us so delightfully old-fashioned, would appear civilised and uninteresting beside their grandmothers; each generation sheds a few characteristics—which the next generation does not regret because it has no idea of them—but originality is not attached to such appearances: when it fails us in the plain workman we find it in the well-dressed artist; sincerity is the parent of originality, and no amount of civilisation will prevent sincerity from occasionally bursting upon the world. The French language as we see it degraded in the newspapers is only the ghost of itself, but Fénélon and La Bruyère thought they saw the same phenomenon in their time, and yet the language survived in the works of Voltaire and Rousseau, Chateaubriand and Michelet. I shall point out later that at this present moment respect for words is much more general among writers than it was throughout the nineteenth century.

The same may be said of the decadence in architectural taste: its chief cause is the recently acquired independence of classes which are rich

enough to demand comfort and not developed enough to care for beauty. But while rows after rows of hideous houses dismay the sensitive vision, the delight of numberless artists in the quiet harmony of the old farm or the old country house is daily made more contagious, and must before long result not only in rescuing what is left of the past but in forcing its imitation.

We may safely conclude that mere fashions in costume, language, and ways ought not to be given more importance than fashions have a right to. They must be put up with, like the weather, and if they are counteracted let it be gently. But it would be a thousand times deplorable if seriousness, practicalness, and mistrust of unreasoned impulses resulted, as some people contend they do, in moroseness, unintelligence, and apathy. A morose, unintelligent, apathetic France would have no business in Europe. But this catastrophe is very remote. In spite of superficial appearances magnified by paradoxical observers, the French are still gay. When they put on gravity the uncontrollable spirit soon breaks through, were it only in the inferior form of irony. But gravity is the pose of a few circles. You will find no trace of it in its affected aspect outside the "world," literary *milieus*, and possibly sportsmen. When half a dozen Frenchmen are engaged in a real conversation the conversa-

tion is gay, and circumstances matter little. In spite of persecutions and confiscations, priests and nuns have lost nothing of the childlike light-heartedness which makes their chief charm, soldiers are gay, and workmen are only taciturn where they have to be, in the thundering factory, in the crowded train, in the busy hostile street. Select a sullen-looking navvy in a trench and ask him a few questions: in spite of his Syndicalism and of his probable antagonism to your class, it will be very extraordinary if in a minute or two you do not see him give a funny, good-humoured twist to his answers. I met once three straggling young scouts who probably would have looked duly Methodistical had they been with their friends. Playing truant as they did, they were irresistible in their view of their irregular situation. The oldest one indulged in a comparison between his own kind and a party of American scouts who were just being entertained in Paris. Fanfan la Tulipe *circa* 1750 would have explained his case with exactly the same insouciance.

It is also the effect of mere appearances if the so-called loss of Idealism is said to have resulted in loss of the *élan* which belongs to the race. Propagandism, which Joseph de Maistre, a foreigner, noted as the chief French characteristic at the end of the eighteenth century, is still at the root of all French action and the fountain

of French eloquence, but for the present it has lost its guiding formulæ—the multiform embroidery of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity which dazzled the nineteenth century. The Third Republic has gradually emptied them all of their dynamic force, and the patriotism which has taken their place in the last seven years is wise enough not to be loud. Certainly it is thus quiet merely because it differs from the Revanche spirit of 1887, in being much deeper and stronger. If there had been a war in 1911—not in 1906—it would have been entered on in as brisk a spirit as can well be conceived. In default of a war, any great cause worth the name would easily bring together youthful energies, but careful analysis of the present situation in France reveals the lack of any such cause, apart from the national peril. The disgust created by Radical politics is deep and universal, but its origin is so protean and confused that it escapes the popular grasp.

Is there any more reason for fearing lest the French of the rising generation should have lost their ancestral capacity for abstracting and generalising? Are they going to fall, from sheer mistrust of verbiage and attention to matter-of-fact realities, into what Carlyle called the "post-prandial"—precisely as opposed to the French—way of conceiving things? Is the *argute loqui* a gift which can be lost at a few years' notice?

The very idea seems ludicrous. No generation was ever more full of generalisations about everything—itself included—than the present one. It would be a fault if it were not merely the national bias which nobody can resist. Take the three or four volumes which have been written about the recent developments, read any of the many works in which the private views of young writers—in default of literary schools—are summed up: you will find them as conscious and systematised as if they had been dictated by a Condillac. The marvel is to see the identical sportsmen, who think so highly of action for action's sake, infer as complete a philosophy from their tendencies as if they were professional critics. As to the conversations one hears—say among officers—they are simply brimful of "ideas," and as it is true, on the other hand, that theories or "views" are mistrusted, it must be merely because the native propensity has never been so unconscious of itself, so instinctive and rich. Surely its intimate connection with unintellectual human patriotism makes it far more active than it was in the days of Taine and Renan, when speculation ran riot.

Let these croakers croak, and, in spite of childish affectations, do not let us suppose that Frenchmen are less French for being sensible and cool-headed: France had been herself for many

centuries before she became infected with the intellectual diseases from which she is at present recovering. I hope that the reader sees clearly that the credit of the recovery, as I have endeavoured to show, does not belong entirely to the superior insight of the younger generation—practically the only men of fifty who have learned little or nothing by the experience of the last twenty years are limited politicians—but France as a nation gives to-day the impression of something young, whereas at the end of the nineteenth century it gave the impression of age, fatigue, and disillusionment. It is natural, therefore, that we should associate the characteristics of the country in this new state with its younger members. That these characteristics are not likely to vanish as superficial agitations—obviously political—have done before, there is every reason to suppose, and the greatest part of this volume is a defence of such hopes.

10. *Does the Church play any active Part in the Transformation of France?*

This question is one which sympathetic inquirers abroad constantly ask and about which they seem most uncertain, sometimes hearing uncritically sanguine accounts, sometimes unduly pessimistic rumours. It will be made clearer if we ask our-

selves to what extent the Catholic Church is responsible for the reaction towards a higher morality, a more solid social order, and a better mental equilibrium which is the subject of this volume. Two descriptions will enable the reader to answer for himself.

It is a fact that all the distinguished individuals whose conversion from indulgence to morals I have pointed out in another chapter have undergone a similar transformation with regard to religion. They may not be believers, most of them are not and will probably never be; they have been too deeply tainted with the scepticism in which they were bred, or they are both lazy and critical, and they are afraid to launch—somewhat late in the day—into researches which almost invariably demand an undivided and passionate attention, but they speak of religion, of the Church, of priests, monks, and nuns with seriousness and respect. Not only men like Jules Lemaître or Barrès—not to speak of Bourget—who may have semi-political reasons for leaning to that side, but typical Parisians like Capus or Lavedan, men who once represented that vanished entity the *boulevard*, and even at present aim hardly higher than at being the sages of the green-room and the divines of the *Figaro* or *L'Illustration*, men whose attitude is the more easily copied because in most cases it is only a reflexion from movements in society itself, show an

unfeigned respect for the tenets, ethical teaching, and constitution of the Church. Twenty years ago writers of this stamp could not refrain from shrugs and smiles, which meant, as plainly as elaborate treatises might have, that there were things in which a modern man could not possibly believe—they abound in the early writings of Jules Lemaître—all that could be hoped from them was the piety of Renan which the Catholics of those days resented as the worst kind of blasphemy. At the present moment graces of this description are left to country school-teachers. A man in M. Aulard's position loses, even from the scientific point of view, more than is just, because he will sport in *La Lanterne* the wit of M. Cardinal. Look over the list of the French Academy as it stands to-day and compare it with what it was towards the date of Renan's election, the difference is startling: who are the Voltairians of the present day? Anatole France, of course, but he has given up the Academy long ago; M. Lavisse, but how careful he is not to give any offence; M. Hanotaux, but his superficial unbelief made room for explicit belief in his book on Jeanne d'Arc; M. Hervieu, but he never printed a line against religion. The next to be quoted ought to be M. Richepin, but he would be very angry if anybody took the entirely literary violence of his early verses seriously. And the numbering must

end there. The thirty-five other Academicians are either practising Catholics or favourable to Catholicism.

This state of affairs would be found to be the same in all the literary circles of Paris, in the lecture-rooms, in the provincial universities, in the local literary academies. Men inclined to speak harshly or satirically of religion feel that it is better form in them to refrain, and they do refrain. In order to find exceptions we have to go down to *Universités Populaires* where an unfrocked priest or a Syndicalist with a philosophy may innocently retail Haeckel to a not very enthusiastic audience. The transformation obvious in Literature is hardly less so in the Press. Apart from *La Lanterne*, *L'Homme Libre*—edited by M. Clemenceau—and possibly, on a few occasions, papers as ignored as *Le Gil Blas* has become, the Parisian periodicals have gradually adopted at least an apparently sincere neutrality in religious matters. The radical suppression of any anti-Catholic articles in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* was the very remarkable forerunner of this change from the day when F. Brunetière took the Review over, after the death of Buloz. The *Figaro*, the *Eclair*, the *Echo de Paris* are completely different from their former selves. The few people who complain that the stories in *Le Matin* and *Le Journal* have become so proper that even girls

may read them, do not seem to miss the old anti-catholic lampoons once habitual to these papers. Only a few years ago *Le Matin* was justly regarded as deliberately and craftily working against religion. The appearance of the journal *Excelsior*, a Catholic rival, compelled it to adopt another policy which is said to have been officially notified by the proprietors to the Archbishop of Paris: certainly it is a far cry from the miniature essays of M. Vautel —a *genre* which suits the French reader admirably—to those of the late M. Harduin in point of orthodoxy. The accomplished business men who conduct the paper are anti-christian Jews, no doubt, and this still appears sometimes too clearly; but their commercial instinct as well as the intelligence of some of their subordinates shows them the advisability of discretion in religious matters. A very widely circulated weekly, *Les Annales*, edited by Madame Brisson, the daughter of the rabid anti-clerical Sarcey, having given offence on a few minor points to Catholic readers, not only made public amends for the slip but applied to the Paris Archbishop for a priest who would correct the proofs from the theological standpoint. The *Journal des Débats* has become a liberal but decidedly Catholic organ. Many such instances could be quoted. Suffice it to say that no popular journalist can be named who is anti-catholic in his writings, and the best known

of that kind, the great anarchist of fifteen years ago, Urbain Gohier, points out religion as the only solution to the moral and the social problems of to-day. If we look back to the history of the past three centuries we shall find that this neutral or sympathetic attitude of the intellectual adviser of the man in the street is an unheard-of phenomenon. Since the days of the Renaissance they have been either resolute believers or no less resolutely, though not always openly, the reverse. Broad religiousness in Frenchmen grown up outside the pale is a feature of the last few years, and it shows that at least prejudice has come to a standstill.

Parallel with this transformation is one which was inevitable in the public spirit. The violent hostility against the Church which prevailed among the aristocracy in the days of Saint-Evremond and Fontenelle, among the upper *bourgeoisie* at the time of the Encyclopædists, among the teaching body under Louis-Philippe and Napoleon the Third, and which finally gained the lower strata under the influence of Gambetta, Ferry, and Paul Bert, has almost ceased to be visible in France. Of course, it still exists in the Chamber among the Radicals, and in the narrow provincial circles which keep Radicalism alive against the whole country as four or five Jacobins would keep up the Terror in a town against the

whole population. But you have to look for it, and its rampant attitude of the days when M. Combes was master is only an irritating memory. Those people have long lost the contagiousness of faith, and all their energy comes from the desperateness of their greed. This cannot last long: let any fortuitous circumstance dispel the equivocations which are to-day their only protection, and even the pitiably dog-like submissiveness of the country elector to his master, good or bad, will lose its last support.

The Freemasons who even in the not far away days of the *espionage* system were so much spoken about, so dreaded on one side and so courted on the other, who reigned almost supreme in the Chamber and Senate, and were not afraid of excommunicating a politician for dissenting from them in a division, who thought themselves so powerful that they had finished by taking pride in the terror they caused, could hardly aspire nowadays to the rôle of scarecrows. The Radicals, it is true, understudy them, but their old parts are all worn out, and no amount of Masonic brotherhood will give freshness to denunciations of the Inquisition when it is the Income Tax that is at issue. The Lodge as a rival of the Church has had its time, and if ever it resumes that position it will have to go to school to better teachers than it used to have.

There are no vestiges of the anti-clerical feeling which was positively in the air as long as the lower classes identified social progress with politics, and insisted on seeing in the Church the last bulwark of tyranny. Priests are not popular, except in some of the poorer quarters, but they are no longer gibed at when they go about; no songs are heard against them, and when you happen—perhaps once in a year—to see an advertisement for some *feuilleton* recalling the days when a Jesuit was the villain of the play, you involuntarily wonder if it did not get there by mistake. Even Syndicalists with the poor materialistic notions which often accompany their social doctrine are only anti-clericals in a sort of neutral way. They have long ceased to regard the idea of heaven as in the way of terrestrial improvement and have no more objection to priests than to astronomers: their quarrel is with the Socialist deputies who exploit them and with the belated workmen who will not increase their numbers; the *Syllabus* is nothing to them.

As to the more refined circles, they affect the greatest reverence for everything ecclesiastical: though a mild indecency is rather the rule among them, it is fashionable not to blame the Bishops when they blame the tango: it is good form on the contrary to try to give them some sort of satisfaction, were it only by changing the name

of the objectionable mode or pastime, and you should see how zealously aspiring young hostesses take the cue.

Another very striking feature is the reserved attitude of the public with regard to the internal divisions of Catholics about politics or discipline. At other times the newspapers would have been filled with angry or bantering comments on such questions as the condemnation of the *Sillon*, the substitution of Pius the Tenth's indifference for Leo the Thirteenth's sympathy with the Republic, the exceptional mode of electing the Bishops, the attempts at founding a Catholic party, especially the prohibition made to the Abbé Lemire to stand for the Chamber; now hardly anything is said on those subjects. Is it because the country has become so indifferent that it would not care for discussion? Or is it rather because there is a sort of tacit understanding among the French not to make capital of anything likely to bring the Church once more unpleasantly to the forefront? The latter, no doubt; but the reader will see this more clearly later on. For the present I am merely stating facts, and it is a fact that the old feeling of hostility or superiority to the Church is no longer discernible in our atmosphere.

All that I have said so far concerned rather the passive or receptive portions of the country

than its active influences. What of these? Are they friendly or antagonistic? What is the attitude of people intelligent enough to be interested in religious problems?

The honest answer is that there is very little said on these subjects. Catholics have become reticent about their theological views since the publication of the Encyclical against Modernism. The difference between the young priests ordained in the last seven or eight years and their predecessors is very great: the latter were full of the necessity of a proper apologetic to influence the highly intellectual modern man, the former are active propagandists of a decidedly pastoral type. Not one of them has begun to make his mark as a scholar, but several have attained to distinction almost on leaving the seminary, as leaders or organisers. The great theological production which we saw between the years 1895 and 1905 has dwindled down to the usual output, and nobody, outside a small circle of men who cannot fancy the prospect of keeping their manuscripts under lock and key after Horace's ninth year, seems to mind.

The same inactivity prevails in the opposite camp. A Catholic untrained in scientific or biblical criticism need not be afraid of appearing in the circles in which he was sure not very long ago to be taken to task. His former opponents

have had to make up their minds about the truth of Brunetière's once famous indictment of Scientism: it seems ludicrous to-day that people should have expected the last word on the vital problems to be said by physicists or biologists. Bergson and William James have come, and with the return of Pluralism the sense of mystery has reappeared, along with a lassitude at the mere idea, as Bossuet says, of everlastingly seeking and never resting satisfied. This is not the time for speculation. Philosophising demands peace and the prospect of a long leisure, and what everybody seems to be craving is merely a little truce and breathing space to await less impatiently the final settling of multiform difficulties. The typical positivist who could not meet belief without challenging it at once to state its reasons is a fossil. As to the sceptic who disdained launching into discussions because all creeds were absurd, his point of view has changed: he is as silent as before, but his motive is different; all creeds, he thinks, are wedded to insoluble problems, and he is respectful where he used to be supercilious.

Even the war which the Radicals in or out of office still wage against the Church is not what it used to be. Of course, the Doumergue Cabinet could not resist the temptation to gain a little time and please a few of its friends at a small expense by suppressing a batch or two of the

surviving religious orders. M. Doumergue also repealed the two decrees taken under the preceding Ministry concerning the rights of fathers to have something to say to the choice of school books, and the advisability for naval officers to hoist their flag at midmast on Good Friday when ships of other nations did the same; but this is only the ungentlemanliness of the Radical who does you a good turn without loving you, and an ill one just because it may please somebody else; there is no faith in it. The moment there is the least appearance of a possible resistance no action is taken. No Government, however Radical, would dare take measures against the Catholic *Associations de Pères de famille*, or against the Catholic schools; the splendid headway which persecution made under M. Combes is lost. Meanwhile several steps have been taken since 1910 which showed a wish on the part of the successive Governments to conciliate Catholics. The courts have invariably and with a sort of complacent coquetry given proofs of impartiality in cases wherein ecclesiastics were involved, and more than once have taken Canon Law into implicit account; the military chaplains have been quietly reinstated, at least in case of war; the Barthou Cabinet refused to withhold the allowances granted to the Beyrouth University conducted by French Jesuits; the feast of Jeanne

d'Arc has been declared a national festival—a measure which had repeatedly been thrown out so far; finally it would not be difficult to adduce instances of collaboration in the Near East between the French and the religious authorities; the decoration by the Government of a Levantine Bishop, Monsignor Chebli, and the distinctions given to the Lazarist Lobry by the French Embassy at Constantinople had a very marked meaning. The universal feeling is that many an unbelieving deputy who advocated Disestablishment would gladly undo what he has done, if deputies could make abstraction from the sordid sides of their trade.

As a conclusion we may say that the Catholic Church has fewer enemies at the present moment and more friends outside her own pale than she has had since the lull after 1848—when the feeling seems to have been very similar, and the moral atmosphere which the French wish for—when they do not actually produce it—is very like her own.

All this is encouraging, no doubt, but it sounds more negative than positive, and the reader may be saying to himself that the action of the Church in France is more like a magnetic influence than a visible interference. This impression is correct; if it were not, the numerous English well-wishers

of the Church would not ask, so anxiously and doubtfully, as they generally do, how she stands and what are her prospects. It would be unjust to deny that she makes conquests; the conversion of men like Bourget, Claudel, Péguy, Francis Jammes, Psichari, and many imitators of less note but of intelligence and culture, is a tangible and very impressive result of efforts in valuable quarters, but this progress compared with the situation of Catholicism in happier times or countries cannot be called considerable. Practising Catholics are still little more than a fraction of the French population, about a third; most French people are christened and buried by a priest, but between those two terms they stay away, and their ignorance and indifference are appalling; politically speaking, their numbers are so small that one had better not mention them. So, compared with the position of their co-religionists in Germany, Belgium, or even in the United States, the French Catholics not only have no power, which goes without saying, but they have hardly any weight: there is not one constituency in twenty in which they can control an election. They begin indeed to have their own Press. The *Croix* is one of the big dailies, and several provincial papers are so thriving as to appear comparatively influential, and yet influential they seldom are outside the few country-

sides I have just referred to; or if they are, it is by showing their conservative rather than their religious tendencies. As a body of men with whom the leaders of the great political factions have to reckon, therefore, they hardly count. Being scattered, that is to say unable to show anything like an imposing front in an emergency, they are practically invisible, and this accounts for the ignorance of them in which even well-informed and travelled foreigners remain.

It would be more than unjust to say that the Church of France is, in her active representatives, below par. Her clergy have never been more regular; in a great many places they live in circumstances which would revolt even their poorest peasants, and they never say a word; they work and persevere with a simple cheerfulness which often strikes as perfectly heroic if one remembers that the hope of better days does not even begin to dawn; the seminaries are wonderfully managed considering the difficulties their Rectors have had to encounter, losing their professors in a great many dioceses after the expulsion of the religious orders, and having to vacate their houses everywhere after the Separation; the teaching is on an average better than it was, and the spirit of the young men is exactly what the Bishops want it to be; discipline seems

much more natural to them than to the preceding generation. As to the religious communities which survive on semi-tolerance or are dispersed and awaiting the chance of reforming, it is too heart-rending to think of their hardships to weaken them by expression. A great book could be made by most of us merely collecting the instances of simple courage which have come to our personal knowledge. But all this expense of patience in numberless forms is humble and unknown: it keeps the Church alive, but the effort is unperceived and the results are obscure. Certainly many people, friends or foes, were surprised at seeing the Church survive when her ruin had been looked upon as a matter of course, but her existence is, as might have been expected, without *éclat.* The roll of her famous men is short. There may be somewhere a country priest as holy as the curé d'Ars was sixty years ago, but no prodigies are worked in his little church, and we do not see pilgrims from every part of Europe flock to his confessional. The last mystic writers worth the name—and how inferior to Olier!—were Monseigneur Gay and Père Libermann. We do not see any great Bishops with genius enough and eloquence enough to play the part of Pie or Dupanloup. The preachers we hear are good and holy, they tend toward that simplicity which is the condition of efficiency, but how far

they are from a Lacordaire, even a Ravignan! Their fame seldom travels beyond the few churches in which they periodically appear. What Catholic writer can we place beside Veuillot? It is a strange thing that the literary champions of the Church, men of the type of Bourget, Bazin, Bordeaux, or the poets Claudel or Jammes, should be laymen rather than ecclesiastics, and that the most eloquent of all, the advocate of the country churches, Maurice Barrès, should not be a believer at all! The only realm in which Catholics achieve distinction is, in spite of the rarefaction I have mentioned above, ecclesiastical erudition. The *Dictionnaire de la Foi Catholique*, the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, the *Dictionnaire d'Apologétique*, the *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne*, the *Dictionnaire d'Histoire Ecclesiastique* in process of publication or just published are great undertakings, and the names of the Abbés Batiffol, Touzard, Tixeront, Jacquier, Saltet, Michelet, of the Dominicans Lagrange, Vincent, Dhorme, of the Jesuits Lebreton, Prat, de Grandmaison, Condamin, and Cavallera, are greatly respected. But outside a small circle of specialists who knows either the works or the names?

It is not surprising therefore that the Church should be almost hidden in France. No numbers, no social or political power, no fascination of great talents, all these negations combine in making her

position one of great possibilities rather than achievements. And it is not surprising either that without some guidance and proper illumination outsiders should have no idea of her situation.

We are therefore placed before this apparent paradox: a Church destitute of every means for captivating the imaginations and working upon hesitating wills, and a country which fifteen years ago rebelled against it in every possible way now showing its influence in all the manifestations of its inner life.

Paradoxes in real life do not exist; they are only logical paradoxes with which our astonishment at something unexpected will amuse itself. It goes without saying that the Church in her present reduced condition in no wise recalls the powerful society she was in the thirteenth century; but were she a thousand times more overshadowed in France than she is at present, it would not prevent her from being an irresistible force. Was there a great deal of real antagonism in this country when persecution was raging? Everybody acquainted with the true feelings of the French knows that there was not. Anti-clericalism was political, and it never spread far outside political circles. Let this kind of politics wear itself out, and anti-clericalism was sure to pall. Let the quiet indifference of the *bourgeois* be alarmed at the sight of confiscations, and

anti-clericalism was sure to become frightening. Let the intelligence of the cultured get a surfeit of materialistic confidence, of ever-disappointing promises to explain or explain away everything, and sympathy with mysteries was bound to succeed the craving after too simple theories. Let a great national shock like the Tangier affair bring home to millions of patriots the necessity of being united instead of persecuting one another, and the idea of petty molestations could not but become sickening.

All the possibilities of anti-clericalism lie in certain memories and certain fears. The memories are not, as people will often imagine, those of the *Ancien Régime:* these are quite forgotten. But there are still men who remember the state of affairs described in Taine's early letters, and against which he is never tired of inveighing. Their fear is of a Church powerful enough to control civil power, or possibly to present mysticism too universally. Take away that fear, and the Frenchman of to-day, like his ancestors—the mediæval man and the critical seventeenth-century scholar—leans immediately towards the Church; for on one hand he may dislike dry theology, but he loves directing his actions by the light of a fixed doctrine, and on the other he cannot possibly sever morals from its religious basis. Now it matters little whether the Church is strong and

numerous or weak and scanty: the Frenchman does not look upon her as a body, the object of the statistician's or the social philosopher's study —all these details he ignores—she is part of his traditional life, and when he goes back to her, it is as a man goes back to his earliest experience. Indeed, as unreasoned as a natural process is the movement towards Christianity we are witnessing: it ought not to be looked upon as the passage of a man from a house to another house, but as the gradual and almost unconscious return of a family to a disused but very convenient room. Criticalness is totally absent from it.

The question naturally arises: What is the Church doing in the obscure condition which has just been described? Even if she is not very active in France as a body, she must have some sort of activity of which individuals at least cannot but be aware, and the knowledge of which is sure to make the present more intelligible and the future easier to foresee.

A brief summary will help the reader to realise how far the Church does influence individuals, and to what extent she is even beginning to make her presence felt in the State in her new situation as an independent community.

Everybody knows that Napoleon's Concordat with Pope Pius the Sixth worked in two ways.

After nearly ten years' disappearance it restored the Church in an official position, but this Church had been so diminished during the Revolution, she had lost so completely the wealth, knowledge, and corporate traditions which had given her independence, even under Louis the Fourteenth, that the State must inevitably have the upper hand over her. The consequence is that when the State was favourably disposed towards her, as under the Restoration, or in the early part of the Second Empire, she appeared powerful and prosperous; when on the contrary the civil power was jealous of her, as under Louis-Phillippe, or really hostile, as during the Third Republic, she seemed to be despised. In either case everybody was conscious that she was dependent, and being dependent she had no enterprise and but little energy. The Bishops, being appointed by the Government, were often reduced to the humiliating position of "prefects in purple": they were carefully kept isolated, communicating with Rome under difficulties, and hardly at all between themselves; the priests also were mostly appointed and always maintained by the State; their churches and houses were not on their hands; so though poor they lived an easy peaceful life; their flocks saw them through the haze of ancient habit or ancient prejudice, as institutions rather than persons, and respect rather than

obedience was the keynote of their intercourse: besides, the Rectors, apart from exceptional periods when Government used them as political delegates, seldom demanded obedience; the tradition since the Concordat was for them to stay at home a great deal, and when the times were against them they merely took refuge in the hope of a "good Government."

All this means that their attitude was on the whole unimpeachable, but differed entirely from that of the really influential clergy as seen in Germany, Belgium, Ireland, Canada, and the United States.

It is not surprising therefore that they should have been inclined to accept the Separation Law when it was passed in 1905, and that they should have been somewhat bewildered when, the year after, Pope Pius the Tenth imposed upon them the virile but unexpected course of not accepting it. The consequence was liberty, but liberty with all its burdens. Bishops with not a farthing of the old Church property left found themselves confronted with the necessity of procuring accommodation for their seminarians, and money enough to keep their priests; poor country rectors in poorer neighbourhoods were turned out of their houses and had not only to look after themselves but to provide for the expenditure involved in the worship. For the first time since the very be-

ginnings of the Church in Merovingian Gaul, the French clergy had to seek an economic basis for an existence which had been purely spiritual because it was perfectly secure.

It seemed strange at first to see the priests going from house to house collecting money for the *Denier du Culte*. Money plays in the life of the French peasant so important a part that it is proverbial, but money transactions are generally buried in deep secrecy, and it was a shock to see the man who for ages had been the most remote from anything worldly engaged in financial manœuvring before the eyes of a whole parish. Yet the tradition is established already; the comparatively small amount necessary to secure for each priest the thirty to forty pounds with which he is satisfied is found in almost every diocese, and one immediate result of applying to the faithful for assistance was to make them feel, for the first time, an interest in the life of their Church, and to render Catholic Associations possible. They now exist in every diocese, and excepting the well-known countrysides in central France in which religious indifference is the rule, practically in every parish. The old vestry councils have been replaced by more active committees, no longer exclusively consulted on parochial expenses, but interested in religious progress generally, and comparing notes in occasional

congresses. The anti-clericalism of a great many school-teachers almost automatically produced the creation of *Associations de Pères de famille*, which only see that the books used and the teaching given do not exceed the limits of neutrality, but which the evident purity of their point of view has made, from the first, exceptionally influential. In the richer or more religious dioceses there exists a certain number of Catholic schools which the State not only does not help but tries—vainly enough, it must be confessed—to suppress or impede. Wherever such a school can be founded the parochial life shows remarkable intensity.

Women have done more than the men for the reorganisation of the Church. The *Ligue Patriotique des Françaises* numbers more than half a million women who have managed so far to keep away from politics, and show unparalleled activity. Very few are the villages in which they do not help the priest in hearing the children their Catechism, and every now and then do not get some Parisian lady member to give a public lecture in a hired room, a great novelty and a great attraction in rural districts where the kinematograph only begins to penetrate. In most of the larger villages the priests have been able to build a special room for such entertainments, and the presence of this building, which is the first visible

evidence of Catholic activity in its new form, strikes the rustic mind more than anything else. I have seen people comment excitedly on the appearance outside a railway station of a plain house destined for the Catholic railwaymen. The superb churches or schools which they might have admired a few years ago, and which had also been built from private subscriptions, did not strike the popular imagination so vividly as the prosaic sign implying that railwaymen are not afraid of calling themselves believers. Wherever there is a beginning of organisation, something to show, as the humble propagandists put it, the clergy find it easy enough to bring together a number of individuals whom mere preaching used never to reach. In many industrial towns, where the men are naturally grouped by their work, it is not exceptional at Easter to see no less than seven or eight hundred men in church together. These results, brought about by the gradual employment of association—a discovery of yesterday in France—and by the inevitable contact of the priests with their people, are of course very local and hardly perceptible outside the parish, but they are the real commencement of Catholic life as distinguished from the mere Catholic tradition, and as such are highly interesting to record, only eight years after the Disestablishment.

Besides activity on the lines of association, there is another great feature which I can say to be characteristic of post-Separation Catholicism: that is rigidly enforced concentration. This concentration, needless to say, is the work of Rome, and Pope Pius the Tenth is largely responsible for it. It was the Pope who, in 1906, decided that the Separation Law should not be accepted, and several measures—the direct appointment of the Bishops by Rome, for instance, and the postponement of plenary assemblies of the French episcopate—were evidently intended to keep the French clergy immediately under the influence of the Papacy. The Roman authorities probably thought it wiser that the French clergy, so long used to the tutelage of the State, should not be left too much to themselves during these first few years after their liberation.

It is needless to recall that the war waged against modernism showed the same protecting spirit, but the opposition made by Rome to what is called inter-confessionalism may be less known: the condemnation of the *Sillon*, the prohibition made to clerics against attending lectures in the State Universities, the condemnation of the *Maison Sociale* founded by the well-known Sister Mercédès, had no other object than to keep Catholics among themselves, and discourage them from joining, *qua* Catholics, even excellent works

initiated by other communions or merely undenominational. Clearly the wish of the Pope is for Catholics to appear before the world as primarily believers.

It was inevitable that such a policy should find exaggerated and consequently dangerous champions. Half a score of men, most of them journalists, and all of them arrogating to themselves the mission they take, sometimes very doubtful morally but invariably loud, have had no difficulty in bullying the Church of France in the name of obedience to the Pope, inventing new heresies, charging their opponents with Episcopalism when they could not accuse them of Modernism or Liberalism, abusing people worthy of all respect, one after the other, until they came to speak of the Count de Mun as a dangerous Liberal, and to denounce learned Jesuits as Modernists in disguise. This crew—in spite of the fact that one of them was found to be a hypocrite leading the loosest life while affecting orthodoxy, and finally getting turned out of his order and reappearing the next day as an agnostic journalist—might have gone on spreading terror through the Episcopate and the Catholic Press, if the Jesuits on the staff of the *Etudes Religieuses* had not published [1] a powerful article which, although written in self-defence, was nevertheless a general indict-

[1] Vide *Etudes Religieuses*, 5 janvier 1914.

ment. This article produced universal relief, and it is to be hoped that henceforward the Bishops, and not a handful of cowardly bullies, will interpret the Pope's policy for the Church of France.

Is there anything like a definite political action of the French clergy? No. Pius the Tenth differed from his predecessor insomuch as he did not recommend adhesion to the Republican constitution, but he did not recommend any constitution whatever. He insisted on Catholics preserving their political liberty and being at will Republicans, Monarchists, or Imperialists, so long as they promoted the Catholic liberties. This evidently cannot serve as a basis for any popular politics that might be called Catholic. But nobody is sorry. Practising Catholics who are numerous enough to maintain the moral influence of their Church in France are not numerous enough nor politically united enough to appear at any advantage at an election. The attempt made by two very good men, Colonel Keller and M. de Bellomayre, to found a Catholic party that would be a real party, was a woeful failure. So the French Catholics have no political programme. There may be a few Bishops who are personally Monarchists, and the general disaffection with the Republic throughout the country has certainly cooled the loyalist enthusiasm which greeted Leo

the Thirteenth's adhesion to the *régime*; also the slow but steady antagonism against the ideas, dreams, and vague modes of speech of the French Revolution which has been the fashion since Taine amounts to a perpetual criticism of the democracy, and Catholics hear it as everybody else; but all this is not enough to make unity where there is variety, and only Radicals can seriously denounce clericalism where they see reaction. Only in two points have the Bishops conducted a resistance—which proved successful—against certain provincial newspapers like the *Dépêche* of Toulouse, and against the selection by school teachers of anti-catholic books. There was no question of the Republican constitution there, and the Bishops were helped in their campaign by notoriously Republican organs.

One might go into many more details; the school question alone would require a long chapter to be presented in its entirety, but details are not necessary for my present purpose, which is merely to ascertain how far the moral trend of France is influenced by the progress of the Church, and on the contrary they might impair the clearness of our vision. In troubled periods like this, details often take an undue importance and mislead rather than enlighten. Suffice it to say that the Church not only has survived the crisis in which she was expected to perish, but that she is doing

better than she did for a long time, having galvanised dormant forces, and living as near as possible to her spiritual ideal. Slowly and silently she grows used to her new conditions and becomes conscious of her new self. She has no wide designs, no sublime conquering prospects; her members are too much occupied with trivial problems which have to be solved day after day, for any of them to reveal the outlook of a Saint Bernard. So she goes on, cheerful and childlike as usual in the everyday life of her members, guarded behind a protecting zone of strict theology in her corporate existence. But of all this the "world" outside is ignorant, facing its own difficulties and viewing the Church as a home tradition, not at all as a society in the making: its development and her development are parallel phenomena with hardly any contact.

What the future will be it would be futile to prophesy. Who can tell whether the present mood of France is a beginning or only a phase? Materialism as a philosophical doctrine is outlived undoubtedly, and patriotism takes in numberless instances the Christian form of self-denial. But who would be sanguine enough to read in these changes a return to the Gospel and its detachment from the earth? The Bishops complain that vocations to the priesthood are becoming rarer everywhere, and some people account

for the decrease by the military laws, and by the timidity which the persecution of ten years ago left in the minds of Catholic parents. But is this a sufficient explanation? Is it not true that the self-indulgence which has come everywhere along with improved economic conditions, and with everlasting discussions about man's rights apart from his duties, is becoming universal? Is it not possible that the decrease in clerical vocations arises from gradual resistance to one of the strictest injunctions of the Church, and that this problem is intimately bound with the larger question of depopulation? Families with one child will hardly dedicate their one son to the service of the Church, nor will the Church be much inclined to look to such for her ministers or even champions. There is little doubt but this will be the *crux* of the near future: Catholic theology offers no loophole of escape, and yet the inclination to forget it appears universal. If this inclination becomes stronger, not only will the difficulty to keep up the numbers of the clergy grow worse and worse, but the quality of the Catholic family will deteriorate, for subtle selfishness corrupts all that is more characteristically Christian, and only leaves intact respectable conformity. Economism, with its multiform consequences, undoubtedly is the most terrible obstacle that Christianity has as yet encountered,

and minor phenomena are merely indications of its magnitude.

But, on the other hand, a saint may arise. There is enough self-forgetfulness bordering on heroism in the devotion of the clergy to their work to make the hope a probability, and who can foretell the effect on a generation which may abhor poverty, but does not seem afraid of death in the cause of an ideal? Certainly the hope of the future does not lie to-day—as it did in the not remote past when everything was hanging on intelligence and theories—in an adaptation of belief to science, but in the superiority of belief as a source of heroism over the mediocrity of economic philosophies. The sight of a saint might change into religious abnegation the energies which are so far limited to patriotic courage. We can only wish and hope, but it is a fortunate coincidence that just when France as a nation feels the need of an uplifting faith the depositary of the ancestral creed should be through persecution and poverty as pure a medium as can well be imagined. This at least is a fact, if all the rest be only hopes, and it is speaking from the mere historic standpoint to say that the Church seldom, if ever, had such rare opportunities.

DIVISION B.—MORE CONSCIOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF THE NEW SPIRIT

1. *The Return of French Literature to its Traditional Spirit*

THAT there is an ethical change not only in French literature, but in the French press and in the French spirit generally, is a fact which I have shown in previous chapters; what I wish to investigate is whether, alongside of this moral and probably pragmatic change, there is not another, of a purely intellectual or artistic character, which would matter even more; for nations, like individuals, will sometimes feel that it is useful for them to act right, whereas thinking right is a vital process through which they cannot go at will, and the consequences of which are immeasurably farther-reaching.

It seems to me that the French think more according to their tradition and temperament at the present moment than they have done for a long period.

Let any Englishman ask himself what the

word *French* connotes in his mind: I am certain that in nineteen cases out of twenty he will find that it is intelligence, wit, brilliance, a certain dash, a certain outspokenness of a very decided character, a gift for clarity in expression, a natural balance, an aversion from obscurity and exaggeration. As he reviews these characteristics, there are others which he resolutely discards: depth, the working everyday variety of common sense, the proportion between object and method which constitutes practicalness—above all, the inclination towards a richer if less definite apprehension of spiritual realities which in one of its aspects is religion and in the other, poetry. Of course it will be found that this view of the French nature not only does not apply to every representative French individual, but even does not cover every period in the history of French thought: I feel convinced that the idea of the French temperament almost universal in England has been abstracted mostly during the two periods in which Englishmen seem to have derived most pleasure from living in Paris, viz. the eighteenth century and the most brilliant years of the Second Empire—the time of Chesterfield and Walpole, and that of Sir Richard Wallace.

Now what Walpole appreciated in the countrymen of Voltaire was not by any means that in them which was paving the way for the Revolu-

tion, but rather the reverse; what the brilliant English colony in the Paris of 1860 loved was not the sober philosophy of Taine, no matter how English in its parentage, but the frothy spirit rife on the boulevards, and this evidently was rather a restricted view. Pascal, Racine, Bossuet, the great French scientists, the great French inventors, can no more be left out of an estimate of the French genius than Shelley can be ignored by a Frenchman trying to see how far poeticalness is associated with the matter-of-fact genius of England. Yet the notion which we form to ourselves of a people foreign to us is, as a rule, the product of the consciousness and pride of that people itself rather than an abstraction of our mind. The Frenchman pleases the Englishman when he ascribes sound common sense to him, and he in his turn feels that the Englishman is right in thinking of the French as mostly a clear-headed nation with more logic than imagination. It is with these notions as a background that, comparing the nineteenth century with the beginning of the twentieth, we can pronounce the latter to be, on the whole, more obviously French than the former.

The nineteenth century can be described as the age of Romanticism and Naturalism, and neither the Romanticists nor the Naturalists seem unmistakably French. Victor Hugo and his con-

temporaries offer a new type in the history of French literature. Not that in many parts of their productions they do not voice feelings deeply seated in the national soul, and perceptible, say, in the poems of Villon or in the mediæval epics, but their literary *ethos* is a novelty. The national characteristics before them had been summed up in la Fontaine's couplet:

> Ne forçons point notre talent,
> Nous ne ferions rien avec grace.

There were ease and balance in the French writers of every degree, from Bossuet down. Nobody seemed anxious not only to appear, but even to make himself, more gifted than he naturally was: there was in literature a sort of hierarchy—based on admiration for others, to be sure, but also on self-respect—which was not its least charm.

Now when we read George Sand, Michelet, Balzac—that is to say, the great Romanticists—and especially the greatest of all, Victor Hugo, we are everlastingly conscious of a contradiction. Here is wonderful facility and versatility, an immense production which ought to suggest enjoyment quite as much as labour, and yet we cannot get rid of an uncomfortable impression that under this activity there was an effort. Not one line of Voltaire or Diderot ever produces this effect, and

almost every line of Victor Hugo does. Giants as he and his compeers were, they all look like Sisyphus. All their lives they tried to be more than they were, to achieve more than they could do. They were all of them hypnotised by a notion, which they had made for themselves, of what genius is. Instead of seeing genius as a possibility and a more or less frequent realisation, they would imagine it as a permanent mental condition—in their own language, they persuaded themselves that Dante or Shakespeare were as continuously Dante or Shakespeare as an Alp, a Pyramid, or a Cathedral are what they are, and they strove to live up to their imagination. Hence their frown and the anxiety they sometimes conceal, sometimes complacently display; hence their haunting idea of an unheard-of creativeness, the longing after an expression which may be at the same time lyrical, epic, and philosophical, the straining after the sublime, or at all events the startling, in every word they write. In one short phrase from the classic vocabulary they so much despised, they are inflated—that is to say, exaggerated and discontented, and they are failures. Even the sixteenth century authors, bombastic as they often are, and frequently inferior to their ideal as the lack of a fixed standard must have inevitably made them, seem happier; and as to the writers of the two classic ages, they invariably strike by the suc-

cessful appearance of their mental lives. The notion of suffering as the inseparable companion of literary work owes its origin entirely to the Romanticists.

Failures also are the Naturalists, even the most famous of them: Flaubert, and—a long way behind him—the Goncourts and Zola. They not only suffer from the inordinate ambition bequeathed to them by their predecessors, but from the constraint of a formula in which they deliberately shut themselves up. Flaubert, whose natural bent was poetic and lyrical, spent his whole life in compressing his gifts and trying to make his splendid imagination the handmaid of what he insisted on calling the real. He had revelled in the composition of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, the first version of which must have been written in pure delight; but *Madame Bovary* was a work of labour and patience, and *L'Education Sentimentale* is as depressing for the reader as it must have been for Flaubert himself. Naturalists excluded everything that did not fall under the category of the real, and poor Flaubert, who had a strong, if not very noble wing, had to clip it, keep his eyes steadily fixed on a few square feet of a very prosaic world, and peck at almost invisible little facts instead of flying freely. However, his failure is less one of achievement than one of method. *L'Education Sentimentale*, although painful reading,

is true art all the same, and might have been written in artistic enjoyment. The mistake of Flaubert was ambition in the wrong direction, an exaggeration of modesty, the suicide of a man passionately in love with life.

Very different the error of Zola: it recalls that of the Romanticists. The author of the *Rougon-Macquart* certainly was a born realist, a collector of small facts, with a sense of their individuality. If he had had no higher ambition than that of being an accurate painter of low life, one might have a certain contempt for his nature, but not for his artistic vision: he would be a sort of Restif de la Bretonne. But Zola had as much ambition as Hugo. The latter wanted to be a sublime seer; Zola would be the social philosopher, condescending to translate his philosophy into images as true as life itself, and more easily intelligible. He honestly believed that his thirty volumes, each one of which was more artificially conceived than its predecessor, were a faithful picture of life, a document for statesmen and moralists to build upon. The illusion at all times would have been strange —no sane man can imagine that fiction is the truth, and it took the literary gullibility of the nineteenth century to suffer mere novelists to place themselves on the pedestals from which they looked down upon their betters—but in Zola it was ludicrous. The philosophy he pretended to

embody was the wire and pasteboard doctrine known as Determinism; Zola felt sure he could build the history of the Rougon family as infallibly as Taine thought he could deduce the philosophy of English literature from a cold and foggy climate, and it was in all seriousness that he regarded himself as such a reader of the modern soul that his counsel ought to be sought on all hands: he felt his responsibility with irresistible comicalness.

The same can be said of all his school, and it is chiefly on that account that we are inclined to look upon their *ethos*, as well as that of the Romanticists, as foreign to the national temperament. It is not because they are low and immoral that we can with difficulty think of them as legitimate products of the ancestral soil, but because they are glum, gruff and dictatorial, short-sighted and maniacal, and because, when we complain of their inferior morality, they can only offer us, in order to redeem it, the seriousness of the moralist instead of the smile of the ironist.

On the whole, the good-natured, unassuming and comrade-like French disposition was offended by the Romanticists aiming higher than anybody has a right to, and by the Naturalists calling their impassivity a scientific attitude, and their taste for the filthy a devotion to the truth. Beside something debasing, the French felt there was something hypocritical in the Realist School.

When, towards 1890, dawned the transformation which Brunetière very aptly called the Renascence of Idealism, France was ready for the change. The public had had enough physiology, and wanted to hear about souls; they were tired of harshness and craved tenderness and pity; tired also of the depressing and the coarse, they longed for elegance and cheerfulness. This satiety caused the tremendous success of Bourget, who was refined and a psychologist; of Anatole France, who, beside Zola, looked like an eighteenth-century engraving after a public-house daub; of Loti, whose every feature was a novelty; of Barrès, too, who in his early manner seemed positively to flit along the earth where so many were still crawling. Distinction, wit, humour were delightfully refreshing, and the roused native taste of the French welcomed them as long-lost, prodigal sons coming home at last, sick of too coarse a world.

Was it or not an untoward circumstance that along with this return to the traditional ideal came the acquaintance with foreign literature, which we owed above all to Melchior de Vogüé? Certain it is that the movement, which in its origin — the criticisms of Brunetière and the inclination of Anatole France and Bourget—had been distinctly French, soon became Russian and Scandinavian. It was in vain that Jules Lemaître

pointed out in one of his subtle articles that if we wanted pity and tenderness, the apology of love and the canonisation of suffering, we need not look for them further than the novels of Victor Hugo, George Sand, and the Goncourts, or the dramas of Alexandre Dumas; the public would not hear, and during a decade French thought and French feeling, which had just found themselves, were deeply tinged with the powerful emotion of Tolstoi and Dostoievsky and the inferior but irresistibly magnified influence of Ibsen and Björnson.

The love of the humble, the sympathy with the suffering, the passion for justice which ran so deep in Tolstoi's broad current, certainly were needed after the heartless Scientism of the writers on the wane; but what was not needed was the predominance of feeling over reason which suddenly filled French literature as it had filled it before the Revolutions of 1789 and 1848, the unresisting abandonment to foreign ideals, and the humanitarianism which was so soon to transform the Dreyfus Affair from a judicial case into a civic war.

At the close of the nineteenth century the battle of the national tradition against its restriction to Naturalism had been won, it is true, but apart from a few imitators of Anatole France and Bourget, French writers, as a rule, would have

been at a loss to prove that their literary ideal was more French than foreign, and the atmosphere of their productions, like the Romanticist atmosphere, once more possessed a noble but vague quality, an excitement both fascinating and baffling, which disconcerted the native taste for self-control in the expression of sentiment as well as of ideas.

On the whole, then, we are warranted in saying that the nineteenth century may be a fortunate reaction against the pallid classicism of the latter part of the eighteenth, and a return to sources of inspiration which had been eminently French until the Renaissance, but both this reaction and this return were accompanied with excitement and fever, exaggeration and violence, and they were often helped on or out of their way by foreign influences, which give them an uncouth appearance. Bombast, obscurity, a one-sided view of art placing the sublime in the exaltation of the low, a research after originality which was to end in the elaborate complications of the Decadents, have no right to call themselves French.

It is beside this description of the French way of thinking during eight or nine decades that we will at present place our attempt at an inventory of contemporary characteristics in literature, leaving it to the reader to find for himself how great is the contrast.

The germs of a fresh growth of the national taste which I have pointed out above in the success of Bourget and Anatole France, Loti and Barrès, also in the return of Moréas to a purely classical form, and in the curious partiality of a Verlaine—a modern Villon—for the eighteenth century, its *fêtes galantes*, its marquises, its peculiar emotiveness hidden under polish, its graceful bravery and its limpid expression, all this unexpected craving for the traditional charm was, strange to say, accompanied once more by a foreign element. Wagner, the prophet of heroism, commented upon by Nietzsche, the admirer of brute force and the revealer of Napoleon, had his day of popularity, but it was to teach the French that the only way of being great is to be one's self. From that day the French mind and spirit have tended with all their energies to be resolutely, nay, exclusively French, and the change is visible in every department of literature: it can be pointed out in poetry and in the novel as well as in criticism.

It is difficult to mention French poetry to English readers without calling forth the somewhat contemptuous smile of Charlotte Brontë. The French language is not poetic, they think, nor is the French mind. Both are too clear and clear-cut; place Racine beside Shakespeare or Musset beside Shelley; French poetry is only an eloquent cadence.

I am not going to discuss these strictures. It is a fact that the French mind uses prose as its readier instrument, and it is also a fact that, at this present moment, when the French spirit reasserts itself, poetry is far in the background compared to what it was at the beginning of Romanticism, when Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, and Vigny occupied the front part of the stage. There are more poets than there were at any period of French literature, and their average work is superior to what it was in the nineteenth century; but poetry is not popular, and the best-known poets, the most successful—say, Henri de Régnier and the Comtesse de Noailles—do not reach the twentieth part of Victor Hugo's public.

The reason is not because the French are less capable than they were of appreciating poetry, but because poetry has suffered in popular estimation from its too obvious faults of twenty years ago. Who was the great French poet towards 1890? Mallarmé, no doubt. And what was Mallarmé? Worse than an Alexandrian, for his pleasure in writing poetry was not the Alexandrian's pleasure in mere words, but the Cubist's perversion in using a medium for a purpose not its own. Mallarmé's object was so to use words and images that twenty readers of the same poem might be placed by it in twenty different states of mind, and no such over-refinement will ever be popular.

I have not the least doubt that if Francis Jammes or Madame de Noailles, especially such a true poet as Charles Guérin, had appeared immediately after the Parnassians, before Mallarmé had run away from Parnassian harshness to the other extreme of disintegration, they would be even more popular than Sully Prudhomme was in his last years. Poetry has never been the national mainspring in France—ideas and eloquence play that part—the French have had no Homer, or Dante, or Shakespeare, or Goethe—but it would be absurd to say that they do not love poetry, seeing that when they cannot get it at home they go all over the world to find it. Only they want it to be as intelligible as prose, if it is in a different way; hence their partiality for Villon, Racine, and Musset; hence, conversely, their shyness of the Decadents.

Now it is certain that the contemporary school of poetry is reassuring. We may safely say that its principal names are Madame de Noailles, Francis Jammes, Viélé-Griffin, Henri de Régnier, Paul Fort, Claudel, and Verhaeren, to whom we feel almost constrained to add Charles Guérin and Angellier, both recently dead and better known after their death than they had been in life. All these poets are clear, except Claudel, whose occasional obscurity gives him an almost farcical appearance entirely irreconcilable with the superior

parts of his productions. It is not always easy to disengage the pagan philosophy of Madame de Noailles from its expression; hers is a childish little soul with great flashes of joy or sadness springing unexpectedly from the childishness, and the contrast is perplexing; but you find your way in and out of her meaning as easily as in and out of the French gardens she so fondly describes. Henri de Régnier and Viélé-Griffin started with the technical singularities in vogue twenty-five or thirty years ago, but they gradually gave up this Decadent legacy, and their most popular poems demand no effort or commentary. Francis Jammes' transparent purity naturally excludes complication, and if Verhaeren is apt to appear tumultuous and misty, it is after the manner of the torrent; the least attention shows order where there is only too much matter. Paul Fort often recalls la Fontaine. As to Guérin and Angellier, the sensitiveness of the former and the wealth of imagery of the latter are united to a precision of expression which almost requires some training not to appear cloying.

The same may be said of the rising generation of poets. There may not be much poetry of the truly heart-felt and heart-nourishing order in the verses of Jules Bois, H. Barbusse, Bocquët, Rivoire, Pottecher, Bonnard, Porché, Caillard, even in those of Lucie Mardrus and Hélène Picard

—two women of virile intelligence—or in those of the catholic poets, Mauriac, Vallery-Radot, and especially Mercier—an amazing handler of words and a sincere believer—but there is nothing that will discourage the long-scared reader, there is none of the carelessness which gave an occasionally amateurish appearance, even to Lamartine and Musset, even to Hugo, and there is frequently the rarity of touch, the sudden gleam over an everyday word which delighted the first readers of Tennyson.

What are we to conclude? That after the Parnassian glacier and the Decadent jungle, French poetry is coming to a more open space, where the sun and the breeze of real inspiration may rise any day, and if Claudel or Madame de Noailles cannot be called national poets, they possibly are the forerunners of one who will be truly French. The mediæval emotion of Claudel certainly is French, and so is the medium which he might borrow from Jammes, or Madame de Noailles: why should not the combination of such an inspiration with a form as clear as that of the seventeenth century, and more poetical, mean greatness, and greatness of a decidedly national character?

I said above that owing largely to the unintelligibility of the Decadents, the French are less devoted readers of poetry than they used to be. But there is another reason for this

comparative desertion. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, and Vigny, all poets, were the protagonists of the literary world, the purely material conditions of literature were very different from what they are to-day. There were yet but few papers, and even magazines; literature was expensive, though not very well paid, and as a consequence poetry stood a better chance than it does nowadays, when high and low are simply besieged with newspapers, reviews, and volumes of all kinds. The literary grandee since the development of the Press after 1830, and the invention of the *feuilleton*, has been the novel, and whether we like it or not, if we want to ascertain the tendencies of a time or country, it is in the novel that we must look for them. It is remarkable that this kind of literature attracts authors quite as much as readers, thanks to a fallacy which one minute's examination is enough to dispel, but which most people will not see. The novel combines two powerful attractions: it is easy—considering the multitude of its adepts—and yet it is great—considering that the fame of Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoi, and George Eliot is built upon it. The consequence is that the many modern activities which are attracted to literature because it is a handy manner of gaining distinction mostly devote themselves to it.

The ineradicable hope which lives in every literary mind of some day, through luck or patience, producing a masterpiece, deceives them; no man so much as the novelist flatters himself to attain the maximum of effect with the minimum of effort, and the tangible result is a daily increasing flood of fiction.

Is it possible to bring order and light into this chaos of names and books? Can criticism see its way through such a confusion? Many who have engaged in this task[1] seem to have given it up in disgust. The idea now prevalent among critics is that we are too near this overwhelming production, and that it will take years to distinguish its really important features. Attempts at clarifying are discouraged by a circumstance which is a novel trait in modern literature, and makes discrimination more difficult. Nothing was so striking in the literary history of the nineteenth century as the inclination of writers to be their own interpreters. From Victor Hugo to M. Saint Georges de Bouhélier, from Romanticism in its cradle to Naturism, no sooner had a young man an idea which seemed of any promise, than, instead of testing it through production, he began to

[1] *Vid.* Muller et Picard: *Les Tendances Présentes de la Nouvelle Littérature.* Paris, Basset, 1913. Henriot: *A quoi Rêvent les Jeunes Gens?* Paris: Champion, 1913.

theorise about it in the tone of a consummate artist who, with forty volumes behind him, could draw on his experience and build solidly upon it. This was sometimes daring, sometimes—much oftener—comical, but the results made for clarity. All these disquisitions, revelations, and manifestoes, frequently accompanied with acclamations, denunciations, and excommunications, almost immediately crystallised in formulæ which attracted attention and eventuated in the formation of schools. This self-analysis and clarification, of course, made the business of the literary historian much easier than it would have been without them.

To-day these conditions have changed. The gregarious instinct has deserted literary men, and they live apart. Is it because they have seen the folly of expecting inspiration from recipes, or because they have a tendency to despise all Bohemianism and would blush to meet at the *cafés* of old, or simply because literary jealousy has been irritated by very practical considerations arising from the advantages attached to a literary connection with a daily or weekly paper? Certain it is that, apart from a few beautiful friendships, literary men nowadays avoid one another as carefully as newspaper correspondents are apt to do, and whenever they hit upon an "idea" seem as anxious to keep it to themselves as their predecessors

were to crow over it and make it obtrusively public.

The consequence is that most essays in contemporary literature limit themselves to guarded statements extracted from authors and reconciled more or less satisfactorily with their books. Synthesis is hardly ever attempted. Yet the idea of the modern literary isolation, like most general ideas, is one which becomes less discouraging upon examination. The gregarious instinct is for the time being in abeyance, it is true, but the even stronger instinct of imitation at its root is not, and we can still, without too much difficulty, see it at work in the literary world. That there are tendencies is clear, and plagiarism makes them as visible as the glaring tickets of old used to. In fact, had we only the titles of modern novels from which to conjecture their affinities we could do it: in nothing does imitation betray itself so much as in the choice of a title, and talent itself frequently falls into this pit.

Careful observation of the literary field shows beyond a doubt that two tendencies have for some time been at work: one which we feel immediately constrained to call realistic, and another for which we are, on the contrary, at a loss to find a name, but which seems obviously to take no pleasure in too close a reproduction of the real.

Modern Realism is well represented in a literary

body which was at first regarded with some distrust, but upon which duration has conferred authority, viz., the Goncourt Academy. This Academy, consisting only of ten members, was founded by Edmond de Goncourt, not in imitation, but in evident rivalry of the French Academy. The latter, having throughout its existence associated moral with literary canons—with the result of leaving out such men as Molière, Balzac, and Flaubert, discouraging Daudet and openly despising Zola—seemed to E. de Goncourt unworthy of representing the pure artistic feeling, and so he made his own foundation on absolutely different lines. The present members of this Academy, MM. Geffroy, Rosny, Bourges, Hennique, Mirbeau, Descaves, Léon Daudet, Paul Margueritte, and Madame Judith Gautier, certainly have very little in common with the French Academy: the something forceful but bordering on the violent which distinguishes almost all of them would be decidedly objectionable at the Palais Mazarin. Year after year the Goncourt Academicians seem in their choice of the books to which they award their prizes to have mainly in view some amends to a young writer for being unjustly and narrow-mindedly over-looked by the official judges in the French Academy. This attitude is so marked, that even an ordinary reader would begin to see his way through the multitude of modern novels

merely by putting apart such as he feels would be agreeable to the Goncourt Academy and suspicious to the other.

Now, how should we characterise this realism of the Goncourt Academicians and of the writers they patronise? It is as different from the realism embodied in Zola as Zola himself was different from the Goncourt brothers. It is true that *La Fille Elisa* paved the way for *l'Assommoir*, but *La Fille Elisa* was written by Edmond de Goncourt after the death of his brother, and the real Goncourt taste was certainly not for the gratuitously low and horrible. These writers were artists; they were so with so much resolution that the reader is conscious of an effort where they wanted only to apply a method, but the effort is in the opposite direction to that followed by Zola. Where Zola wanted the dreary fatalism of what he called life to reign supreme, the Goncourts would seek another element: they selected and arranged, and their pleasure lay as much in the treatment as in the accuracy of their matter. With more taste than power, and yet an inclination towards a kind of novel which required power before everything, it was impossible that they should ever rise to the first rank, but it is no less true that their notion of realism—nature artistically dealt with—has been realised in the best fiction, from the *Odyssey* to *les Paysans* or *Middlemarch*.

It is in this same spirit that we see practically all contemporary realists approach their subjects. Leaving aside a few older writers, like Mirbeau, Descaves, or Hennique, who never could tell robustness from brutality, they see that the inherent faults of realism, viz. lack of mellowness or atmosphere, aloofness and harshness, are indeed faults and not distinctions, and they try to remedy or conceal them.

Most of them believe, like the Goncourts, in the redeeming virtue of style; they are artists. The only difference between men like the Rosny brothers, P. Margueritte, and—in spite of his exaggerations—Paul Adam, or—among the younger generation—writers like J. A. Nau, Mme. Colette, Binet-Valmer, Savignon, Elder, Werth, Hamp, Roupnel, Pergaud, and the ultra-refined imitators of the classics whom we shall speak of by and by, is merely that they seek a higher relief than the others and are more attracted by popular naturalness or intensity.

Beside these we find others as incapable as themselves of painting otherwise than from life, but whose natural bent is to tinge the picture with their own mental colouring. Some of them, undoubtedly under the influence of Dostoievsky, are positively soaked in sadness and tenderness. Geffroy, the author of *L'Apprentie*, Frapié the author of *La Maternelle*, above all Ch. M. Philippe

—recently dead, but a daily growing influence—and his obvious imitators, Hirsch, Moselly, Ch. M. Garnier, and Marguerite Audoux, are all painters of the humble life, but they select it for its inherent pathos, which reveals an abyss between them and the soulless author of *l'Assommoir*, who selected it for its crudities.

Finally, another school seems also to crave something richer than nude reality, but its tendency is not sentimental. L. Bertrand, the Leblond brothers, d'Esparbès, the seaman writer Claude Farrère, Montfort, often also P. Adam and the brothers Rosny, locate their stories in sumptuous surroundings, frequently under glowing colonial heavens, and with a general wealth of background throwing its reflection over the everyday details. This method once more brings us much nearer *Salammbo* than *La Terre*, and evidently ignores the canons of Naturalism.

On the whole, it appears evident that the gloomy workshop, or, if you prefer another simile, the sordid hospital room next door to a charnel-house, in which the school of Zola indulges its sombre mania, has been deserted, and that the taste for the real, without which the works of Molière, Lesage, and l'Abbé Prévost would not exist, is once more associated in French literature with art, its indispensable guide.

This, after all, is merely the condition of

literary beauty in any language or country, and might only mean that the French have recovered from the strange exaggeration into which the sickening formality of classicism in its decay had thrown them; but it is only one aspect of the contemporary production, and there is another of far greater significance.

The literature of the nineteenth century, as already said, almost invariably gives us the impression of an effort. The Romanticists as well as the Realists and the Naturalists always seemed to show off—they compelled us to admire their muscles. Their redundance is nothing else than the complacent repetition of the amateur dumb-bell performer, and it is not surprising that it gave so much offence in the few eighteenth-century drawing-rooms which were reopened after the Revolution. It jarred as barbarous, ungentlemanly, and foreign. After nearly a hundred years it is the same reaction we witness in at least fifteen out of twenty literary people, and one refrains with difficulty from labelling the schools I have just reviewed as "less French," in the sense which I endeavoured to define at the beginning of this chapter.

What the Romanticists bequeathed to us consisted chiefly in an admiration of the exceptional; a straining after originality which, in the space of a decade or two, completely transformed

not only the literary conceptions, but, which is more extraordinary, the language itself. Thousands of snobbish imitators of Hugo forgot the medium they had received from Voltaire, because they despised what they called its cheap elegance and superficial clarity, but they could not so easily invent one capable of taking its place. The French they wrote was now bombastic, now bordering on the coarseness which Revolutionary levellers had imposed with the "*tu*" and the "*citoyen*"; but it was hardly ever rich. One single generation is unequal to the long work of ages in the formation of a language combining accuracy with picturesqueness. The semi-international and fleshless vocabulary of the Press, just then finding favourable conditions, completed the disaster. Whereas literature spoke a language of its own, different with each writer, and which was eventually to develop into the wild inventions of the Decadents, mere readers learned another, from which the grace and the pith of its predecessor were entirely gone. So after the decadence of taste we saw the decadence of the language, which is the beginning of barbarism, and one could have hardly foreseen that a restoration of both taste and language was so near.

Who is responsible for this unexpected turn, it is not very difficult to say. Renan, by his classic taste and intellectual honesty, was a link

between our writers and those who thought more of what they had to say than of the manner of saying it; Anatole France worshipped the French undefiled of the eighteenth century, and many a young man learned it in his books as one learns a foreign tongue; Jules Lemaître, both in his style and in his way of judging things, even in his charming personality, was a revelation. Here was a Frenchman of wide influence, content with the popular qualities of his race and disdaining anything that his countrymen could not with proper culture attain, and yet with this modest ambition it appeared that he not only made the most of his gifts, but, compared to others of apparently higher flight, was found decidedly superior. Once more the art of thinking summed up in

Ne forçons point notre talent

showed its long-forgotten efficacy, and the lesson was taken to heart. Add that the something vulgar in French politics of which everybody became more and more conscious and tired, threw the dissatisfied minds back to gentler times, and went far to prepare the soil for finer literary seeds.

The characteristic of the generation of literary prose writers now between twenty-five and thirty-five is certainly, in the phrase of one of its representatives, M. André du Fresnois, that "*elle a*

rappris l'aisance." They have re-learned naturalness, and their gait is elastic and free. They never frown and they often smile; they are capable of emotion, but they shun sentimentalism, and morbidity is loathsome to them; instead of everlastingly talking about truth, they aim at what our ancestors modestly called "justness"; you never hear them utter the word "attempt" with the boastful humility of the Decadents, to whom anything new was a thing admirable, but they are not afraid of thinking of perfection; they are enthusiastic, but when they feel so it is for good reasons, which they are ready to give you; finally, they have gone back to the days when the language was full of idioms and racy phrases or images, which certainly were the common property of all, but had more charm on the lips of a porter who had caught them from his mother than in the books of a Romanticist who laboriously re-invented them; their French is once more crisp and direct, or graceful, and to the immense relief of some of their elders, they spare us adjectives. In short, they are very near the combination of qualities which foreigners were wont to call French in the days when this word had the most meaning; and being French, that is to say themselves, they are happy, which is a precious literary asset, far superior to the vain hope of becoming some day sublime.

Trying to number these new writers would be futile; their multitude baffles the most honest desire of keeping up with their production, and frequently discourages classification. A great many of them are mere imitators of that greatest of imitators, Anatole France, or at best of the writers whom Anatole France imitates. Behind Henri de Régnier, Pierre Louys, Marcel Boulenger, the brothers Tharaud, &c., you could find a host of men and women who have had the revelation of the remarkable virtue of the *pastiche*, viz. to make inspiration possible for people who otherwise would never know what it meant. There is no deep originality there, to be sure, but there is a simplicity nearly akin to sincerity, and there is, above all, the resurrection of the language. Were it not for his irony, Anatole France would only be the top boy in a large class of pupils of Voltaire and Montesquieu, and, in better days, would not be taken seriously. But seeing that what he gave us is exactly what we needed, he is, in one respect at least, a genius, and his imitators, if they are only imitators, are at all events the makers of an atmosphere in which something better than imitation will grow.

Even now we meet with many works which it would be unfair to label as mere imitations, although their classical parentage can easily be traced. Of humorists like Tristan Bernard,

André Beaunier and Jean Giraudoux we feel constrained to say that what imitation has afforded them was only the possibility to be themselves, and that they are really themselves.

Besides we already find a whole school of novelists, the special quality of whom has no prototype: it is the school of refined and poetic writers who do too much honour, it seems to me, to René Boylesve by speaking of him as a chief. All that should be said is that he was a forerunner. Here the sharpness of the eighteenth century lines is softened by a smiling tenderness which in most cases must have come straight from Dickens—extensively read in France—or by the poeticalness of Fromentin. Marcelle Tinayre, J. des Gachons, A. de Chateaubriand, Jaloux, Larbaud, Miomandre, Viollis, Lafon, Nesmy, Mauriac, Vallery-Radot, G. de Voisins, all suggest the classic conception, but all make us see in the background of their stories a bright rainbow which the eighteenth century never conjured.

A similar remark may be made concerning the psychologists, A. Gide, the Tharaud brothers, Benda, especially Emile Clermont, whom two volumes have been enough to render famous. Their novels are obviously conceived and written in close imitation of what used to be called *récits*, and betray the haunting presence of *Adolphe* and of the less known stories which *Adolphe* has thrown

into the shade, but there is a quality in them which would not be found even in *Adolphe*. What this quality is cannot be easily defined; it may be only the contrast between the high plane which a true soul crisis requires and the low physiology of Naturalism, but whatever it may be, it strikes us as an originality. I must also mention a class of writers less intent upon the merely artistic aspect of their work, but who, however, help quite as much as the rest in measuring the distance between the present generation and that which worshipped Zola. After Bourget, Barrès, and Bazin, men like H. Bordeaux, P. Acker, J. Psichari, Variot, and A. Baumann, and—in spite of his splendid isolation and different spirit—R. Rolland, are as interested in the moral and social lesson of life as in life itself, and would be best called Idealists, although the wish to be true is alive in them, as in any Realist.

As a conclusion, let me repeat emphatically that if anybody had predicted in 1880 that less than forty years later the source of inspiration and the whole tone of the French novel would have changed, the prediction would have sounded more than improbable. Yet this apparent impossibility is to-day sober reality, and has for some time ceased to astonish. The battle in which Bourget, Loti, Barrès, and A. France engaged with Zola has been won twenty times over, and no signs

show that another corruption of the public taste is likely.

The reader may very naturally ask himself whether this fortunate change for the better has been productive of exceptional effects, and whether the rising generation has any masterpieces to show. The answer must be in the negative. Not only have our young writers failed as yet to produce anything that may be named with the classics of the French language, but one hesitates to compare them with the authors mentioned above as entering the field before them, viz. Bourget, France, Loti, and, shortly afterwards, Barrès. These young men are all distinguished, but you can hardly call any of them powerful. Is it because their principles are opposed to exaggeration and even insistence, that they are afraid of a strong treatment and apt to indulge in mere daintiness? Or is it because, thinking the literary professionalism of the nineteenth century bad form, they are inclined to act as men of the world with an aversion to repetition? Or are we, the public, to blame, and is it because we have been so long accustomed to the enormous effort of men like Hugo, Balzac, and Zola, even Bourget and Anatole France, that we cannot separate greatness from productivity, and would rather tolerate repetition than apparent inaction? I should not be surprised if this were largely the truth. We cannot remember the days

when Bourget and A. France, having only produced their first works—which proved not to have been their worst—we looked upon them merely as promising young men, very like the promising young men of to-day. Perhaps we only place Romain Rolland apart from the rest because he was lucky enough to strike a vein or, more accurately, adopt a method which enabled him to insist and repeat without being taken to task for it. It may be that if he had written his ten volumes on ten different subjects instead of indefatigably expanding the story of his hero, we should complain of his monotony instead of extolling his power. Certainly the inspiration of the less productive novelists does not differ in quality from that of Romain Rolland: their common characteristic is naturalness and facility, whether the writers indulge in or hold in check their facility.

It may be also that we are coming to a period in which the quantity and comparative excellence of productions will result in a highly estimable uniformity similar to that which strikes the student of literary history in the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century: surely this would be better from the mere artistic standpoint than the ambitious poverty of the second part of the nineteenth.

But whether we are in the presence of mere promises or have to be content with what we

have been given so far, all this is pure speculation, and need not detain us any longer. From the positive point of view adopted in this volume, it is not so, and we can speak with certitude. Certainly the defeat of that low offspring of Romanticism and Realism—the naturalist novel—and the substitution for it of another infinitely more flexible in its forms and calling forth some of the most sterling French qualities—balance, wit, elegance, psychological penetration, and, above all, that incomparable dowry of the national genius, clarity—is of capital significance, not only for literature, but for the intellectual health of the nation at large, and this, as we said at the beginning of this chapter, is what really matters.

In fact, what was the reaction of literature on the popular consciousness from the Revolutionary till the Dreyfus times? A very enervating one. The affectation of impossible sentiments by the poets, the high-flown theories of second-rate philosophers, the laborious obscurity of even everyday prose-writers, were all puzzling and bewildering; and the exquisite letters of Dupuy and Cotonet in Musset's works are only the amusing expression of a very general and very depressing experience. Its immediate consequence was an exaggerated respect for scribblers of all kinds, which had originated under the Encyclopædists, but gradually increased to the extent of making

Hugo's influence greater than that of Voltaire or Rousseau. Finally, it reversed the scale of values in the minds of all except the lucky illiterate, placing art before action, and inducing a preference for sentimental experiences of a rare kind, crises, as they were called, and things which would look well in print, instead of the manly enjoyment of positive influence. Emma Bovary, in this respect, is a wide-embracing analysis. The nineteenth century will appear in French history as a curious lapse in the traditional frankness during which a peculiar kind of attitudinising prevailed, impelling people to pretend understanding, when they did not understand, and to demand sympathy for emotions they never could feel.

Quite the reverse is the result of the recent literary evolution. The transparency in concept and expression which has become an indispensable condition for acceptance is so natural to the French that while it gives them pleasure it causes them no surprise, and consequently the enjoyment of literary excellence has become once more a calming influence. Conversely we see a declared aversion, not unmixed with scorn, to unreasoned enthusiasm, that of Michelet as much as that of popular Dreyfusism, and an impatience of "clouds" of all kinds. The question which was never asked during the classical ages, because it never had to be asked, nor during the nineteenth

century, because it would have been asked too often: What do you mean? is so universal to-day that it will soon become superfluous. It is remarkable that there is only one critical school at the present moment, that of Neo-classics, and that clarity is its only canon.

So literature is gradually resuming its true place, which is behind life as a beautiful reflection of life, and not in the forefront. The literary colossus of the Hugo, Michelet, or Balzac type who towered above the nineteenth century and intimidated even a man like Taine would now be impossible. If his place is to be filled, it will be by a new Napoleon and not by a writer.

I see two main tendencies set free by the literature of the last thirty years, one embodied in the psychological concept of Bourget and Barrès and the other in the irony of Anatole France. The former makes for liberation, for personal responsibility; the latter stands for the superiority of common sense, of French lightness—not levity—of wit as the gaiety of intelligence: both amount to the predominance of action over books. In one word, France is practically cured of the literary malady which went far to make her vital reaction more difficult after 1870 than it would have been a hundred and especially two hundred years before: recovering her taste for light, she cannot but recover her health.

2. *The Meaning of M. Bergson's Success.*

Is it merely a philosopher's success? Is not, on the contrary, this startling vogue another sign of the appreciation of clarity and sincerity which is perceptible on all hands and rapidly changes the characteristics of contemporary literature? I think so.

Fight your way, if you can, into the ridiculously small room in which M. Bergson lectures at the Collège de France, and wait among the expectant crowd until the hour comes. Perhaps you know nothing about the professor, except that he is quite original, constructs the world in a manner entirely his own. This rather intimidates you; philosophy is naturally overawing, and you dread having to make a special effort to understand this particular system. On the stroke of the hour the professor appears. He is a spare little man, with nothing remarkable besides his admirably-formed brow and an exceptionally winsome smile. He has not been half a minute in his chair before you feel that the audience is in simple and familiar sympathy with him. He begins to speak, summing up his previous lecture in the old fashion, and announcing his subject for to-day. There is no solemnity whatever in his utterance, nothing that is not perfectly natural in the wonderfully managed voice, so clear that

only after a few minutes do you notice that it hardly rises above the very lowest key. All he says is simple, but as he says it you become conscious of a constantly growing interest in the question, as if you had never heard it discussed before. From time to time hard and dry facts are adduced from some learned work, but so much to the point that it seems as if they had been collected to serve the professor's purpose. M. Bergson himself is conscious of it, and his charming smile brightens up the thin face. Everything he says makes the subject clearer, until it appears as elemental as if it were propounded by the mind of a child, and philosophy must be the plainest answer to very natural questions which nobody has a business to complicate. The old saying about the orator who turned out to be not an orator but a man sings in your ear, and as you hear it you feel compelled to substitute another phrase of a more purely French character. This man who sees things so directly and expresses them in such clear, almost everyday language is a modern Descartes converting philosophy from jargon, indeed; but he also is what the French language since the days of Descartes has called, very simply but very forcibly, *l'honnête homme*, as distinguished from the pedant. Then you notice that if the presence of a certain number of

smartly-dressed women in this room is objectionable in one respect, it is not so from another point of view; M. Bergson speaks in a whitewashed lecture-room, but it is not amiss that this room should recall a *salon*. How far we feel from the days—not long past, though—when everything, from literature to politics, was only acceptable if it paraded under a thick mask of technicalities!

You leave the Collège de France after a lecture of M. Bergson's as you leave a concert-room after Mozart, with the sensation of something sunny which you would like to be able to re-create when you would; and, as you cannot always be at the Collège de France, you buy the philosopher's three or four volumes and you begin studying them. Are you perfectly satisfied? No. The volume on *Les Données Immédiates de la Conscience* sums up a great deal of purely scientific reading; *Matière et Mémoire* is so compact and full that its apparent clarity is elusive; *L'Evolution Créatrice* is a poem which you read as you read Dante, wading through difficult parts in the hope of coming to enchanting oases. So philosophy, even with Bergson to introduce you to it, cannot avoid being philosophical and dry. This is a disappointment. Another experience in the course of your reading is even more so. As you begin to realise what M.

Bergson means by intuition, you conceive great hopes. This intellectual process, which puts us in immediate communication with realities—it is not philosophy, it is something more general and simple—why, everything told, ought it not to be called an "art of thinking"? The discovery is elating. M. Bergson's philosophy is only a metaphysical novel, as likely or unlikely as the others, and you are not unwise enough not to notice that it is built from the Evolutionists' note-books. But an "art of thinking" is what we all, consciously or unconsciously, are for ever seeking. Nothing makes us so happy as the discovery of a truth: it is what we everlastingly hope to chance upon in talking, and the idea gives something almost feverish to French conversation. And what is, after all, the great charm of M. Bergson's lectures? Only that for an hour he produces no end of startling truths from his simple premises. So the idea that he may give us his secret for thinking right and bright is highly exciting. But as you re-read and re-think what he says about the intuitive process, one unfortunate intuition gradually dawns upon you. This magic process, which looks at first sight like a sublime recipe, is, after all, only a description, and a description of what?—of all things, a description of genial thinking. What do you gain by being told that the only way of thinking right

is to think like Plato, Kant, or Pasteur, and not only think as they did, but think as they did in their most divine moments? This, indeed, is disheartening.

But put the volumes back on your shelves and seek once more the whitewashed room at the Collège de France. This time M. Bergson is lecturing on Berkeley or Spinoza. He may be tempted by some point in his subject to evoke the springing fountain which helps his imagination to visualise the effort upwards of life as spirit and its dropping down as matter; and according to your individual tendency you will like or dislike the invitation the poet-philosopher makes to you of uniting almost mystically with the universal *flux*; but possibly you will hear nothing of the kind. M. Bergson will not make any attempt at solving the great enigma; perhaps he will say nothing that will strike you as deep or even novel; but as he proceeds in his delightful leisurely manner to expound Berkeley's or Spinoza's doctrine you will be conscious of a wonderful gift for showing us a human attitude behind the tendency of a metaphysical system, and you will marvel once more at an expression so perfectly subdued that it hardly seems different from the thought.

This means that what you admire the most in Bergson is his talent. And do not let the dis-

covery shock you. Certainly there are among the young philosophers who follow M. Bergson some who may be as interested as himself in a scientific representation of the world, and there are also many among his admirers who rejoice at the change from Taine's philosophy to his, at the possibilities his criticism of materialism has opened for the moralist; but the intellectual attraction which the most intelligent section of the public feels for M. Bergson is not philosophical. It is not purely literary either. It is that higher aspect of the literary tendency which really is a moral one and constitutes an *ethos* in itself, viz. perfect sincerity, as opposed to the craze which impelled the nineteenth-century literary man to say anything as long as it looked well in print. That M. Bergson is interested in metaphysics appears as a minor point; that he is interested in it as the seventeenth-century people were interested in everything—deeply, seriously, and without any reference to writing or being read—is what really matters. What our contemporaries love the most in M. Bergson is his honesty, and the clear-sightedness which is its reward comes after. This is enough to place the present generation above that which admired Renan. Renan wrote with some of the qualities which M. Bergson displays in speaking, but he was more envied for writing than for feeling like a man of the classical

ages. M. Bergson would be followed even if he never wrote a line. Here, again, we see the deep reaction which differentiates the beginning of the twentieth century from the end of the Romanticist period, and in default of masterpieces is an evidence of the return to the ideal which gives birth to masterpieces.

3. *The Restoration of Classical Studies.*

The reform of the *baccalaureat* initiated by the decrees of 1902 was not badly received at first by the public. Most people had no suspicion that its spirit was political, and it was not easy for them to discriminate between that which in the reform was the work of professors they respected, and that for which inexperienced politicians at the Ministry of Education were responsible. The novelty of the arrangement attracted as it always does, and its apparent broadness reassured. Latin and Greek were not sacrificed: whoever wished to have these languages taught to their children had only a word to say. Many a father, remembering that he had always been poor at the classics and entertaining no delusions about the use he made of them, was glad that a useless burden was not to be put on his son. Mothers rejoiced at the comparative facility of

the new examinations. Certainly English and German with a governess must be easier than Greek with formidable dictionaries. During seven or eight years few protests were heard about the new methods, and they mostly came from writers opposed to the Government and who might be actuated by political animosity. Things changed towards 1910, after the reform had been given its full chance and the results it must produce had become visible in young men of from eighteen to twenty-one years of age. A strong reaction then set in, and remonstrances came the weight of which could not be denied. To the unbounded astonishment of the newspaper readers, the first that was made public came from quarters where it had been little expected. This indictment, couched in strong and remarkably well-chosen terms, was the work of an engineer, M. Guillain, holding no less a situation than the presidency of French Forges and Furnaces. This gentleman complained to the Ministry of Education about the falling off he noticed in young men applying to him. "It was a serious anxiety for people interested in the future of French industry to find so many signs of weakened culture in these young engineers. They managed to get passed at the entrance examinations for the *Ecole Polytechnique* or the *Ecole Centrale*, but they were not prepared for

making the most of the teaching which they received there, and the results were too visible."

Another scientist, M. Lechevallier, well known among the best mining engineers, substantiated the same complaints in an admirable tract which was widely circulated, and which the present writer has been several times both delighted and surprised to see in almost humble homes to which a wise decision about the boys' education is of paramount importance. Almost simultaneously Dr. Raoul Blondel, M.D., declared that his experience of medical students led him to the same conclusions. They might give proofs of premature erudition, they hardly ever gave indications of originality or of that curiosity which only an intelligent early training will awake.

On the whole, good judges who were neither professors nor literary people, but who happened to be in a place of vantage to see where the reform of 1902 was leading to, held it responsible for a weakening of acumen which might well be called a crisis of the French culture.

The phrase promptly became a watchword, and in a short time another was frequently associated with it. There was not only a crisis of the French culture but a crisis of the French language as well, and this time it was chiefly noticed by professors in the *lycées* or by examiners for the *baccalaureat.* The rising generation of boys

were uncertain about their own language; they seldom could account for the words they used or for the meaning they attached to them, and they seemed to have vague notions about their origins, although a great deal of philological zeal was spent on their education. All the professors who thus complained traced the lapse to the neglect of Latin as its chief cause. The boys trained exclusively in translating from or into modern languages and in the reading of French texts appeared to be little helped by their translations, and certainly got little out of their French reading. The latter exercise was too easy to do when superficial, and too difficult to force on the boy's attention when more thorough, to be of any great use. The persevering comparison between French and its parent language, which the old syllabus made of daily use during six or seven years, was far more effective than any superimposed philology. Nothing else would counteract the influence of slovenly-spoken French or of the fleshless language which the newspaper spreads everywhere.

The French Academy, the *Société des gens de lettres*, and two leagues—one of which was called *Ligue des Amis du Latin* and the *Ligue pour la Culture Classique*—echoed the professors' alarm, and a few answers to their statements even by men like M. Croiset and M. Lanson seemed timid

compared to the universal protest. There is little doubt that the return to the classical models begun by M. Anatole France acted powerfully on the public. The elegance of thousands of these imitations not only struck the readers, but somehow the connection between this style and the traditional grace of the best French language could not, they realised it, be divorced from the classic French education. In a short time the effects of this movement of public opinion became apparent. The Government—that is to say, the bureaucracy at the Ministry of Education—of course did not show any signs of having met with this resistance in the country. The decrees of 1902 were not repealed, and the syllabus remained the same. But the parents did of their own accord what the state did not encourage them to do except in the anonymous advice of many headmasters. At the present moment 9 per cent. more boys take Latin than before the reform of 1902, and it becomes shameful once more to be foreign to the classical culture. Let a return to the more virile methods in the teaching of Greek and Latin, of which there are many signs, become more general, and some day, it is to be hoped, official, and the intellectual inheritance of France will be in safety. A classic formation on the broad human bases which the *Université* had laid for it in the early part of the

nineteenth century is sure to make the French conscious of their best characteristics and to replace them in their most natural tradition.

Conclusion.

On the whole, the French as a nation seem to be recovering from several very dangerous diseases: the criticisms of the Revolution by men like Taine and Sorel, the revelation of the snares hidden in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the sickening abuse of beautiful words like "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" in the service of very sordid interests, the transformation by Syndicalism of a problem long considered as individual into a system of corporative claims, the sudden realisation, after Tangier, that a nation is not a collection of independent individuals, but a society; the reintegration of the past into the habitual thoughts of the citizens by Barrèsian literature have gradually cured the French of the individualistic point of view made popular by Rousseau; their tendency, in the presence of any political event or of an idea with enough in it to make it yeasty, is less to examine how far the individual may be affected by it than how far it will promote or hinder the public welfare; they have resumed the habit of viewing European politics in the terms of two hundred years ago,

saying "the interests of France," "the doings of Prussia," as if each Frenchman were an ambassador speaking for his whole country, and not a humanitarian innocent of frontier questions. There are still parties in France, but all except one—the Radical-Socialists—are agreed that building up the politics of a country on its internal divisions is the mistake of men who ought to be municipal councillors in their village and not the leaders of a nation. Socialism and Syndicalism may be sometimes the champions of rights, oftener the supporters of disorder; they have ceased to be either bugbears or dazing-mirrors. Finally, war itself has lost the power which defeat, combined with a poor philosophy and with the increasing abhorrence of all discomfort, had conferred upon its very name. The French, having in 1911 honestly wished for a call to arms which would have been purely patriotic, on that day, we may hope, laid for ever the ghost of 1870.

If we reflect that under the Second Empire and later—as soon as the Third Republic was well established—France was a very hotbed of fallacies sometimes concealed, sometimes embodied in politics, it will appear that few countries have made so much progress in the direction of common good sense and patriotic energy than this country has in the past ten years, and

a glance at the regress visible elsewhere will make the advance even more striking.

All this nobody seems to question, and the German press itself not only admits but, when it serves its interests, exaggerates. What people capable of reflection ask themselves, from sympathy or from racial opposition, is: *Whether this convalescence will result in recovery or in a relapse.*

Nations, like individuals, have moods, and if the laws of their changes are even more difficult to ascertain than those of psychology, we know that they must exist, and we often feel as if we were near discovering them. Intellectual principles are deeply rooted in their proper soil, *i.e.* the minds equal to the effort of nourishing and not merely receiving them, but impressions and impulses are fugitive in the souls of the multitude. Will the ideas of the few be strong enough and stay bright enough to support and enlighten the impulses of the many, or, on the contrary, will not the nonchalance of the millions obscure these lights in its hazy vapour? France has had moods before: in 1876, when the Republican spirit swept away the germs of political good sense planted by Thiers and by the Duc de Broglie; in 1889, after the Boulangist agitation; in 1898, when what was already called the *esprit nouveau* blew over in a few months, and strainings after reason, justice, and courage were seen to come to

nought. Are there more reasons this time to hope that the soul will lift up the body instead of being dragged down by it? The threat of a war for which she was unprepared sobered France when she was intoxicated with false ideas, and roused her when she was for indulging in dreams; but if the war does not come, and if the danger passes away, is it not probable that with peace and indolence the old taste for dangerous speculation will come back?

These are the questions which we hear, and which English people especially frequently ask because their civilisation, apart from any transient political conditions, makes them value a healthy France. It is remarkable that, along with them, another is often put, and nearly always understood, "Will your Government follow suit?" or again, "What sort of a Government do you think you have at present?"

Travelling in Germany in 1805, Madame de Staël experienced a similar uncertainty. She saw that the Germans had a sublime philosophy, canonising the will and pregnant with heroism, and yet they were cringing and unmanly, "using philosophy to account for that which is the most incompatible with philosophy: respect for brute force, and the melting timorousness which transmutes this respect into admiration." She fully realised that the political state of Germany was

responsible for this weakness, and prayed for the advent of free institutions to raise the manners to the level of the theories. What would she have said if, instead of having to do with a philosophy of liberty confronted with despotism of a mild nature, she had seen a philosophy of reasonableness, courage, and self-denial at work in a democratic, and we may well say, a demagogic country? Surely she would have realised that heroism is in great jeopardy in a community governed by men whose interest it is to flatter weaknesses, and she would have said out loud what the English observer politely refrains from speaking but thinks all the same, and thinks so continuously that we cannot but be conscious of the thought: "Shall you have better men to make the most of your better spirit?"

It is to this question that the last part of this book will be dedicated.

PART III

THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND THE FUTURE

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1. *The Problem of the Two Spirits.*

THE problem which puzzled Madame de Staël during her stay in Germany in 1805 was: How is it that a philosophy of the will does not produce energetic men? The problem which has been haunting the mind of every Frenchman capable of thought since the Tangier incident and its terrifying effects has been: Will this philosophy of courage and order espoused more or less consciously by the immense majority of the nation get the better of the inferior tendencies still at work in the swampy confusion of French demagogism?

In the early months of 1913, when it became known that against all probability and above all in spite of the fury of the Radical party, M. Poincaré, then Prime Minister, intended to stand for the Presidency, the problem was put in purely political terms and seemed exceedingly simple: Will M. Poincaré get in in spite of the Radicals?

For a few weeks the Prime Minister who had had the good fortune to appear at the beginning of the Balkan War as a statesman of international celebrity, and who stood in his own country for a resolute military reform as the basis of an effective patriotic action, embodied all that was highest in the aspirations of France.

An incident which, it is true, could not be overlooked, cooled the enthusiasm of some of his most hopeful admirers. The ablest Minister in M. Poincaré's Government was undoubtedly M. Millerand, to whom the French army owes more gratitude than to any general who has held office since 1875. Now M. Millerand, having discharged a duty of common honesty in redeeming a promise made to M. du Paty de Clam—the well-known anti-Dreyfusist—by the Minister who had preceded him, was violently attacked for doing so. Another member of the Cabinet, M. Pams, arraigned his colleague in the Chamber, and M. Millerand felt compelled to resign at the very moment when his action was the most useful. M. Poincaré did not shield his Minister of War, and many people were unpleasantly surprised at this passivity. Yet, as M. Poincaré and M. Millerand were personal friends, the opinion gradually prevailed that M. Millerand himself had insisted on M. Poincaré's taking no steps lest an interference on his behalf should be in the

way of his election as President. At any rate when, a few weeks afterwards, M. Poincaré declared his intention to stand for the Presidency, his candidature was welcomed as the dawn of salvation by all Frenchmen thinking more of the interests of their country than of petty party intrigues; and when the Radicals selected as an opponent to him the incarnation of party politics, M. Pams, the situation was as clear as could be and highly exciting.

For the first time since the election of Grévy in 1879, a Presidential election, though left—according to the constitution—to the deputies and Senators in Congress, happened to be a national affair, and M. Poincaré had on his side the majority of the nation while M. Pams was merely the man of straw of the Radicals. M. Poincaré was elected, and during a few months the country felt as if all its best tendencies, now summed up in one providential individual, were beyond the danger of untimely blighting.

From the very day of the election there was no doubt that the Radicals would never forgive M. Poincaré, and that in the impossibility or quasi-impossibility of ousting him they would at all events fight all his friends and impugn the ideas supposed to be dearest to him, viz. Proportional Representation, the Three-Year Military Law, and above all, a *rapprochement* with the

moderate elements in Parliament recalling the far-away days of M. Méline. The country at large took in the situation and there was no uncertainty as to its preferences. The welcome which the President received everywhere during his tour in the South of France at the end of the summer of 1913 was full of significance. It clearly meant: At last France has a President who is her representative and not merely the representative of politicians. Having been elected constitutionally he can be loved without treason, and his enemies may be regarded as the enemies of the country. So the overthrow of M. Briand by the Senate on the question of Proportional Representation was resented as an insolence. However, it was not looked upon as a personal defeat of the President. M. Barthou, who succeeded M. Briand, was as much as the latter in perfect unity of views with M. Poincaré. Certainly he was not supposed to be as energetic as the President. He was a clever, graceful Southerner, not a stern Lorrain. Yet it soon appeared that this pleasant, genial man was not to be shaken from his position on at least one vital measure, the Three-Year Service Law, and people universally concluded that the indomitable courage he showed in defending this Bill was instilled into him by the President himself.

The overthrow of M. Barthou in December

1913 therefore came as a shock, and when M. Poincaré gave his succession apparently to M. Doumergue but in reality to M. Caillaux—one of his sworn enemies—there was dismay. Some keener observers than the rest had already felt misgivings at noticing that the President would not take upon himself to remove, or in some way intimidate, any of the numerous Prefects who he must know were Radicals and likely to turn against rather than serve him; some Catholic journalists had also pointed out with surprise that the President, who had agreed to act as witness at the marriage of a friend, had refused to go further than the *mairie*, and shirked the Church in true Combist bigotry. This was not all: during the trip in the South, M. Poincaré had not dared to visit the old Romanesque church of Saint-Front at Périgueux, lest such a step should be interpreted as a clerical manifestation. There was certainly an exaggeration of prudence in this. However, nobody had supposed that the President—who apparently realised, when he stood for his high position, that the situation was such that he must face his responsibilities in a different spirit from that of his predecessors—would accept a change of Cabinet obviously directed against him, without a word, without an effort, in the humble spirit of the Constitution of 1875, and exactly as M. Fallières might have done. Some

people will ask: "What could he do? Dissolving the Chamber was out of the question, as it cannot be done by the President without the concurrence of the Senate; even a message, even a speech, clear enough to be more than banal, would have amounted to a *coup d'état.*"

Precisely. The situation forced upon the chief of the State by the Constitution of 1875, and above all by the interpretation of it by ten jealous Parliaments in succession, gives the President no choice between a somewhat daring attitude and complete self-effacement. M. Poincaré has chosen this, and neither he nor any of the supporters of his policy of silence can protest against the effacement having been immediate and complete. Popularity never seeks failure, and the success of M. Caillaux appeared, even to the rudest peasant, as the President's defeat.

No Englishman living in France can have felt otherwise than as if the curtain had fallen on the career of the brilliant Poincaré one had imagined, and the gang of the professional politicians was coming to the forefront again. The general election of 1914 only made this situation clearer: it was hardly construed as a defeat of M. Poincaré—though in reality it was one—but that was because M. Poincaré had practically disappeared from the stage. It is difficult to imagine that, having lost the opportunities which universal

popularity offered him in the first year of his Presidency, he will seize others which will not be half so encouraging, and we may conclude that he will be, like his predecessors, a mere Constitutional President, that is to say, a President with power enough to appoint the Prime Ministers whom the Chamber wishes, but with no power to control either the Premier or the Chamber. If the Premiers are congenial, his intelligence and experience, along with his patriotism, which nothing can weaken, will give him influence, but it will be the timid influence which alone is in keeping with the Constitution; if they are inimical, the awkwardness of his position will only emphasize the impossibility of shaking the tyranny of the majority. In any case, he will never be again, unless he should make a *coup d'état*, the representative of the generous spirit which uplifted France and gathered every energy around him while he was Prime Minister.

Does this mean that this spirit is doomed to die away and leave France once more as she was between 1898 and 1905, without a national ideal or without the courage to realise it? Not by any means. The impulse given at Tangier, along with the slow but steady reintegration of healthy notions into public opinion, is evidently one of the events which history uses as landmarks, and which the disappearance of an individual only

affects in a transient manner. France has been so long waiting for a man, a real man, that whoever succeeds in voicing her aspiration after order at home and dignity abroad, and in securing power were it only for a short time, will be welcomed as M. Poincaré himself was. M. Briand, M. Barthou, above all, M. Millerand—by far the clearest head and the strongest hand this country has known since 1870, outside of the army—have, each one in succession, been that man, and may play the same part again. There may be others less known whom national feeling would be only too ready to acclaim. Two or three speeches showing character as well as rare abilities have been enough to place M. André Lefèvre—until then a comparatively obscure deputy—apart from the rest.

But will the return of even these men to office mean the entrance of France into smooth waters and the end of nearly half a century of confusion? It might be so if some fortunate transformation of the Chamber should give it the unity on a few vital points which made the *Assemblée Nationale* an effective collaborator of Thiers after the War and Commune, but until this transformation happens, "clearings-up" will only be intervals of respite, after which the usual depression will set in again. The anxiety and lassitude evident in the utterances of such un-

doubted republicans as M. de Lanessan, the former Minister of the Navy; M. Sembat, the brilliant Socialist, and M. du Mesnil, the radical editor of the *Rappel*, are shared by millions of their readers. The root of the evil is in a system which tolerates the occasional appearance of distinguished men—welcomed for the time being as liberators—but will not give them any real authority. As long as the Chamber remains supreme in France, discarding or selecting governments as it pleases without either the President or the Senate being able to act as counterweights, and as long as the same assembly thus all-powerful consists of individuals trembling before their electors on one hand and regarding one another as the members of one great syndicate on the other, an enormous mass of excellent work (in the shape of reports and commission work, especially) will be wasted, the wishes of the better class of citizens will be nullified, and the presence of a few men really worth while at the head of the Government will only last long enough to make their defeat more disappointing. There will ever be an indestructible opposition between the representatives of the elector and the representatives of France; a national spirit can have no chances with men rising from the "stagnant pools," nor will a truly national policy be carried on by Cabinets everlastingly changing and in the

power of the groups in the Chamber. The experiment initiated in 1876 has now lasted long enough for sure conclusions to be arrived at, and the main conclusion is that the Constitution of 1875, in its essence as well as in its working, invariably proves productive either of anarchy or of tyranny, and sometimes of both at the same time, as was the fact under the Combes government. The history of France compared with that of Italy, for instance, in the last half century, is a demonstration of the danger of a bad constitution.

The inference is plain: something must be done to modify a state of things about which there is no uncertainty, and this change, whatever its conditions and particular character, cannot but be in the direction of a stronger authority and of greater stability. The national defence can no longer be left to the pleasure of fourscore of demagogues; the foreign policy must be something better than the routine of the *bureaux* or the random speculation of a new Minister; it must become impossible that a man of M. Poincaré's talent and position should lose all his effectiveness merely because he ceases to be in the immediate dependence of the deputies. In one word, authority and responsibility must be something else than words.

2. *Is a Change of Régime probable in France?*

If we were to believe the many people who, in book, magazine, or newspaper, take their desires for realities, and unconsciously interpret their own disgust as an infallible sign of the times, there would be no doubt; a change must not only appear inevitable, but it could not be very far off. The formula at which all these sanguine people have arrived and which they repeat in the newspapers every day is: either a change or a crash.

Are they right in their anticipation?

It does not appear clear to everybody. It is not because the present system has given numberless proofs of its rottenness that it cannot go on. In fact, it was rotten from the first, and it has had not croakers, but clear-sighted critics round its very cradle. It is not because an institution is obviously imperfect that it cannot persist through a long historical period. The Ancien Régime dragged on for many a decade after its death had been prophesied. Why has the Republic managed to live since the establishment of its ruinous constitution? Because its very constitution makes it almost impossible for the country to bring about a change otherwise than through a sort of personal conversion, and such conversions are impossible to a nation. The vice

of the constitution lies in the subordination of every power to the Chamber, but it is the country which elects the Chamber, and there have been so far no sufficient motives at the moment of an election to bring home to the Electorate the necessity of a change. If a war were imminent, or if bankruptcy could evidently not be staved off much longer, or if business were flat while taxation was high, perhaps—it is not certain—the elector might be persuaded to choose less selfish and other representatives, and, even without a change of constitution, such men might find in their convictions the unity of purpose which—whatever the constitution may be—insures order and stability. The sight of mere corruption is not enough to produce this effect: the French have seen the Grévy and Wilson affair, the Panama affair, the Dreyfus confusion, even the recklessness of the Combes' administration with its scandalous disregard of common honesty as well as its indifference to national security; and all this has not been enough, because the cause of the evil once removed—Grévy resigning or Combes being removed from office by M. Clemenceau—the country finds itself in the presence of a Protean power—which is, after all, its very image—and immediately becomes helpless. The dispersed consciousness of twelve millions of electors cannot be expected to be more

active than the consciousness of six hundred deputies.

If, then, the danger of a war can be put off either by Germany expanding in directions where she will have few chances of encountering France, or by the Socialist influence in the Chamber averting causes of friction at the cost of national dignity; if, as the past makes it probable, taxation can be raised much higher than it is and the public debt may be expected to rise in the same proportion as it has done since 1875; if, as is also probable, the commercial expansion of Germany and America does not cramp for a long time the opportunities of French trade, the country may continue to live for years in its indifference to politics. Of course France will suffer: her influence abroad cannot but go on rapidly dwindling, ruinous treaties may deprive her of colony after colony, her Exchequer may appear more and more as a formidable wager laid by Levity against Probability, but the crash, as it is called, may not come for years and years, say until Italy is strong enough to do what Germany would not have done.

This is the answer which many people give to those who will see no alternative between a change and a crash.

Theoretically this answer cannot be refuted: if the past foreshadows the future it may be the

lot of the present generation to witness no change and yet see no crash either. But the formula "a change or a crash" has too much of the epigram or even the jingle of words in its sound to serve as a basis for a serious discussion. The true question is: are there any indications of a change? And if a change really takes place, what is it likely to be? So worded it brings us from the realm of possibilities to that of probabilities, and we immediately see various facts which hardly anybody is inclined to question, and upon which we can build solidly.

Let us recapitulate these facts.

The first and not the least important is the existence in the national atmosphere of a longing, a sort of Messianic expectation of a better state of affairs than the present one. It may be only the proof that the French are not ripe yet for the intelligent use of what they call their liberty. The yearning after some indefinite rescuer belongs to undeveloped natures and negatives all that self-reliance and all that independence of judgment which are supposed to be the moral accompaniment in the individual of the democratic progress in a community. Certainly if the French elector, instead of being content with giving his vote once every four years, on no particular issue but exclusively on one particular person about whom he is generally full of doubts,

were better aware of what he really wants, and understood how he can get it by the judicious use of the right of association, he would trust himself and nobody else, or if he looked for a man it would be a servant, or at best a champion, not a protector. However it may be, the fact is that France wants a new order of things, and is more or less conscious that her present woes are the product of her bad constitution.

Some people will have it that it is an exaggeration to say that France wants a Rescuer, that is to say, ultimately a Master; she only feels the want of an authority and looks for it everywhere without confusing it with the personal influence of an individual. It may be so, but practically the two *nuances* are almost indiscernible. Throughout her history France has shown a taste for strong men, and the moment she felt that the Republican constitution which has fallen to her lot was antagonistic to powerful individuals, but favoured the tyranny of a kind of nondescript oligarchy, this taste reappeared. The popularity of Boulanger in 1886, of Rouvier and Clemenceau —unpopular as they had been—in the years following the Tangier incident, of M. Poincaré in 1912, are well-known instances of this propensity.

In spite of long years of anti-militarism, the French have never lost either their partiality for the brilliant soldier. After Boulanger it was

Marchand, after Marchand, Galliéni, and since then d'Amade and Lyautey. The tendency is to regard a successful general, not merely as a brave and able technician, but as a rarely-gifted man who, after conquering a country, finds no difficulty in organising and administrating it, and does so through simple methods of his own which the plodding intelligence of the civilian will never discover. The tradition of Bonaparte is still alive, and the majority of Frenchmen have known soldiers who came back from Algeria full of admiration for the genius of Bugeaud and Lamoricière.

This longing for energy, coupled with the admiration for order, which has become part once more of the national temperament after being long banished from it, shows even a more unexpected effect: it has gradually produced a sort of tacit reconciliation of the more cultivated Frenchman with the Monarchist idea. It is remarkable that under Louis-Philippe, and especially Napoleon the Third, the Republican idea was mostly upheld by the *bourgeoisie:* the lower classes were quite sufficiently loyal to the "citizen-king," and enthusiastically devoted to the nephew of the great Emperor. To-day the situation is reversed; after years of alienation—caused mostly by the recollections of 1814 and the mistakes of Louis XVIII and Charles X—the

bourgeoisie, apart from professional politicians, have become estranged from the Republic and have assumed towards the possibility of a restoration a neutral attitude which is easily changed into sympathy. Sympathy would probably be more frequent if the leaders of the *Action Française* were less violent under pretence of being energetic, and above all less noisy under pretence of being violent; if their polemics were not constantly personal, and if purely journalistic denunciations—often built on frail foundations—did not occasionally give them the appearance of being in that crude stage of party spirit in which determination is so resolute as to disregard good faith.

As it is, they possess a magnetism for many young men, and have diffused a number of arguments in favour of traditionalism, which, presented by soberer exponents than themselves, slowly penetrate into *milieus* which the *Action Française* itself does not reach or would immediately repel.

This is not the only cause of a modification of the *bourgeoisie* towards the Monarchist tradition. In fact there are many others. To begin with, the youthful sympathies with the Republic of fifty years ago have become aged and wrinkled, while the old grievances against the Monarchy were sinking more and more into the past. Then

the criticisms against the insufficiency of the republican constitution daily read in newspapers of every opinion have produced a simultaneous—though sometimes unconscious—attention to the advantages of stronger constitutions. The French mind has risen from the vagueness of sympathies and antipathies in which shibboleths and formulæ kept it so long to a more lucid examination of the *pros* and *cons* and to conclusions deserving to be called doctrines. At the same time the remnants of Romanticist phraseology, which described a Monarch in the words of Michelet or Victor Hugo as a "tyrant on horse-back," were rapidly becoming ridiculous, while the taste of Verlaine for the courtly atmosphere of the eighteenth century, appeared to be shared by many people open to the charm of old France. Artists are full of it; numberless writers cannot dissociate it from the style they prefer; you notice it not only in traditional Englishmen but even in democratic Americans, with whom it is part of culture and a yearning of the imagination. In short, another atmosphere has been created in which historic considerations seem totally different from what they were fifty years ago. For a long time there existed deep in the French consciousness an antipathy against the idle aristocracy supposed to be the natural environment of a Monarchy. The self-effacement of the titled classes along with the

evident effort of some of their representatives to make the most of changed circumstances and be as loyal as they could to modern principles, has dispelled this in part. At the same time the criticisms of industrial conditions repeated in a thousand forms by the Socialist writers brought it home to the workers that the modern feudal lord is the manufacturer, and the real duke the financier. The last inherited prejudices are rapidly disappearing before this realisation of concrete facts.

Perhaps the best chance of the Monarchy lies in the observations and comparisons which the taste for travelling now common to all social classes inevitably produces. For many years the French had a bookish habit of attacking or defending the Monarchical institutions exclusively from historic considerations. The writers on the *Action Française* have preserved it, and it is a mistake on their part, for the evocation of long-disappeared conditions does not help in making up one's mind about questions of the vital present. Living comparisons between the prosperity and the policies of the countries we visit and those of our own country are far more illuminating. This accounts for a considerable mental change with respect to the monarchical institutions in people who have frequently been abroad. Their first feeling, when they have grown up in an exaggeratedly Republican milieu,

is some surprise at finding no striking difference between the liberty they enjoy at home, and that which they find beyond the frontier. They never feel the unpleasant vicinity of tyranny, and if they happen to see—in Belgium, for instance, or in Scandinavia, or even in Germany—a more frequent and more conscious use of the right of association than they had expected, the truth is suddenly brought home to them that liberty is only a word, or at best, an aspiration, while *liberties* are positive rights daily exercised and valued in consequence. From that surprise they pass easily to a fair examination of the connection between what they see and its political causes; if their minds are lazy and sceptical, they become confirmed in the indifference towards the form of government which is so frequent in France at the present day; if they are intellectually more virile, it is not rare to see them arrive at definite conclusions, and declare that even faulty monarchical constitutions appear far superior in their effects to a poor system of laws decorated with the name of constitution.

This is generally more of a speculative or at best expectant attitude than a conviction ready to engender propagandism, and many of those uncertain converts would be as ready to welcome a Napoleon as a prince of Orleans, but they would gladly see the prospect of a change, and they look

forward to it. If you will consider that this more or less definite aspiration, after a better *régime*, is increased by the universal longing for a strong man, you will not be surprised at a statement which the least familiarity with the background makes almost evident, and which can be put in the simplest terms, viz. a *coup d'état* by a moderately sympathetic person not only would meet with no indignation, but would hardly cause any surprise. Vaguely, I admit, but so powerfully, the yearning after strength, authority, and order has taken hold of the best French, especially in Paris, that a *coup de force* must be a habitual if semi-conscious thought with them.

Leaving aside for the present the possible actors in such a drama, let us content ourselves with trying to imagine the conditions in which it would take place, and the feelings with which it would be received in Paris. Who are the people against whom this violent operation would be conducted? Ask anybody living in France: his embarrassment will show you at once that the tyrant, one would have to get rid of, is not very formidable. It is not the President, it is not exactly the Ministers, though some might be objectionable, it is not exactly the Chamber, though it often appears as a syndicate of dangerous babblers, and though the Constitution works

its worst effects through it. It is rather the Senate, because the Senate has negatived a good impulse of the other assembly on at least one important reform—the Reform of the Suffrage—and because it is the stronghold of the Radicals, who once preferred M. Pams to M. Poincaré. But who is likely to show fight in the Upper Assembly? Who are the influential or resolute persons whom it would be dangerous to let at large on the morrow of a *coup d'état*, because they might summon together the bravest in the two Houses and try to form a centre of resistance somewhere? The list is so short that it appears ridiculous. Yes, if the resolute man, or group of men whom we suppose, were to lay hold of a dozen individuals in the Chamber and Senate, among whom M. Clemenceau and M. Caillaux would probably be the most conspicuous—and of three or four newspaper editors—perhaps only one or two—and if the Parliamentary session were suspended for a brief period, the whole affair would appear so natural as to be little more than an exciting *fait-divers*. There might be an uncomfortable feeling in the public if the newspapers did not appear in the morning, but this would be a mistake which no intelligent men would make, and with papers to give them the particulars of the operation, the Parisians would be so pleased that long before noon they

would be enthusiastic. Some people will imagine that the Bourse du Travail might become the centre of resistance I mentioned above; but that is an imagination. The Bourse du Travail is not so formidable as it used to be; M. Barthou had it searched by the police in the last months of 1913, and several of its chiefs were imprisoned without much protest; as to the supposed interest which these syndicates might take in the Socialist deputies, it would never be transmuted into heroism, and of this the Socialist deputies themselves entertain little doubt. I firmly believe that a fortnight after the *coup d'état*, the few persons whose liberty might have been temporarily suppressed, could without any danger be released. The more one thinks over these possibilities the more one sees that the rampart between a dictator and his success is neither public opinion, nor any strongly organised and sufficiently popular party, but a Senate and Chamber so divided and weak, so impregnated themselves with the belief in a change, that resistance on their part would practically be impossible. To sum up in one brief formula, both the tyrants of France and her possible liberator are anonymous, but the tyrant is a cardboard giant who has long ceased to be a scarecrow, while the liberator is a living hope.

The conclusion of this analysis of public

opinion seems naturally to be: a *coup d'état* or a *coup de force* cannot be long delayed. This is indeed according to the logic of emotions, and shows how powerful the contagion of a widely-spread belief invariably is; but the advisability of doing a thing or the extreme facility for doing it is only one element in the psychology of those who ought to do it, and leaves unaffected the probability or improbability of their accomplishing it. The fact is that the few men who might be inclined to make a *coup d'état* in France are not likely to attempt it, and as to the multitude which expects this from them, it is in that state of expectation which is productive of effects sometimes amazing, but is seldom rewarded by seeing the fulfilment of its hopes. There are at the present moment two of those powerful visions acting magnetically upon French people; the "Grand Soir" with the Syndicalists, and the Restoration with the Monarchists, and, although the latter has immeasurably better chances than the former, it will probably be a cause of disappointment.

A *coup d'état* in the stage of civilisation we have reached, with the organisation of the police, the facilities for rapid information and for rapid communications, is impossible without an immediate preparation which makes it in the end a matter of course. Now, the Duke of Orleans has

indeed a certain number of passionately loyal adherents, and it is a fact that a great many other people are, with regard to his possible advent, in a state of friendly neutrality which success would rapidly change into declared sympathies; but his really effective friends are too well known to the police, they are too far from the magic telephone receivers, without which it is useless to think of rousing Paris, to dream of any serious attempt, and it is probable that the handbook in which two of them have described how the *coup de force* ought to be carried out will remain their nearest approach to action.[1] They will gradually subside into the delusion I mentioned above, in which people are sure of an event coming to pass because it ought to take place, and confuse possibility with probability. This mental disposition helps men to wait for years without dying of impatience, and moreover it is no inconsiderable factor in the formation of opinion.

Prince Victor Napoleon stands much better chances. It is true that his political doctrine is inferior in consistency and cogency to that of the other Pretender—the *plébiscite* or referendum on which it is built is a terrible element of weakness in a constitution—but in a time when the universal desire tends towards a man, the doctrine

[1] *Le Coup de Force, est il possible?* by C. Maurras and Dutrait Crozon.

itself matters little: controversy over it would only begin long after its representative had been at the head of affairs. Now, Prince Napoleon enjoys the advantage of the immense popularity which literature and art have gained and will long maintain, if not for himself at least for his name; the criticisms of the mistakes made by Napoleon the Third, which I pointed out in the first part of this book, are hardly known outside a small circle of specialists, and those mistakes were the errors of an individual rather than of a *régime*: above all, his personal situation is superior to that of his rival. A happier marriage with children and an immense fortune is no mean asset, but this is only one detail. The chief superiority of Prince Victor lies in the fact that while the Duke of Orleans has no friends in active political circles, his rival is in touch with men very near the centre of affairs, and with financiers who may be even more influential. The facility with which a Radical can become an Imperialist, and *vice versa*, is an historical law which is not likely to be contradicted in the near future. Against these apparently overwhelming chances is the improbability of three Bonapartes forcibly securing power in little more than a century, the comparatively advanced age of Prince Victor, and the passivity which his frequent allusions to the *plébiscitarian* doctrine almost inevitably

en gender. One may safely prophesy that if a movement of public opinion should call Prince Victor back from his exile, he would promptly be in a position to make the *coup d'état*, but it is because in that case the *coup d'état* would be merely a sort of formality.

The only person who could do with the greatest ease what the others could only do with tremendous difficulty, is President Poincaré. Even after missing several opportunities (especially at the time of the fall of M. Barthou) any bold initiative on his part would be welcome—a message to the Chamber in the manly tone of that of President Woodrow Wilson on the Panama Canal would produce as much impression as a dissolution. As to the energetic operation which I described above, with the suspension of the Parliamentary session for a brief period, and the imprisonment of a dozen people, anybody with eyes to see must realise that it could be done with the concurrence of just three people: the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of War, and the Prefect of Police; and it is not difficult to name the men who ought to hold these posts to make the operation wonderfully easy, in the general inertness of the lookers-on and the perfect isolation of the Radicals and Socialists who alone might wish to oppose it.

But the President will not do this. He has

settled down too rapidly into the perfect constitutional attitude,[1] and perhaps his political training has made him more like his own enemies than the atmosphere in which he was elected allows us, the public, to realise.

Yet the possibility of a Republican *coup d'état* with the establishment of some *régime* recalling the Directory still remains. M. Poincaré would be in this combination, naturally, but not as the principal actor, and the plot being little more than a lobby intrigue would not appear formidable to the protagonists. Perhaps, the responsibility being shared among several, and the risks appearing inconsiderable, an opportunity will be enough to nerve the possible directors to decision. Whatever might be the results—probably ephemeral, but in the right direction—of their action, the resistance they would meet would only come from rival ambitions, and the country would witness the change with perfect serenity.

What I have said so far sounds rather paradoxical: circumstances are such that they invite the resolute interference of a strong man, but the conditions in which the likeliest persons find themselves seem to preclude any probability of their making up their minds to interfere; a *coup d'état* never appeared more advisable, but what is

[1] *Vide* his address at Lyons on May 24th, 1914.

the good or even the interest if everything indicates that it will not take place ?

I disclaimed from the first any intention of doing more than to point out definite symptoms in the public mind, or in its chief representatives, and draw therefrom the most cautious inferences. Now the fact subsists that in spite of everything discouraging the hope that a strong man will appear to redress glaring deficiencies, the hope of seeing order restored in France through a strengthened authority does not perish. Such a feeling, conscious as it appears in numberless articles and in that highly enlightening volume, *Faites un Roi, Sinon Faites la paix*, by the Socialist Sembat, is eminently one of those motive ideas which Fouillée called *idées-forces*. An aspiration of this intensity directed towards a Restoration would inevitably bring the King back, if circumstances were more favourable ; directed towards the return to authority, when the opposition to it is merely the selfishness and jejune talk of a few hundred politicians, it must produce some effect.

What the effect would be might remain doubtful if it were indefinite in the minds of those who work for its realisation. But this is not the case. By dint of feeling and deploring deficiencies, the remedies have gradually been found, and for the last five or six years they have been made the

basis of an extensive political agitation. M. Charles Benoist, one of the best-known popularisers of political science in France, circulated these general ideas through the whole country during the election of 1914, but they had long been common property, and they are a familiar topic in far-away village inns. What M. Sembat calls the " top-gap "—*le trou par en haut*—would be sufficiently filled in if the President of the Republic, instead of being a " hat and not a head," should be given at least the authority and range of action of a Prime Minister—in fact, if he became the daily heard leader that Thiers was in the early years of the Republic; if the Cabinet Ministers were chosen outside Parliament, or if at any rate they had to give up their Parliamentary position, as in England, before taking office; if Proportional Representation were substituted for the present electioneering system; and if some sort of decentralisation could counteract the enormous bureaucratic congestion bequeathed to France by Napoleon the First. That these simple reforms would immediately transform the political outlook is universally realised, even by the handful who would be losers in it; and, if they were actually brought about, the sensation that an authority at last existed in France would at once be felt.

Now the consciousness that between this relief

and its easy means there is only the weakness of the Chamber, has grown to a degree in which it appears impossible that the Chamber, blind and lame as its origins make it, should not realise it as well, and the Revision of the Constitution seems inevitable.

How this will be done is a minor detail. Perhaps the Proportional Representation Bill will be passed first, and, its moralising influence being certain, it may gradually drag the rest in its train. Perhaps things will happen very differently. It is not impossible—nay, it is much more in keeping with the French aptitude for sudden impulses and wide-reaching efforts after long periods of indolence—that they should suddenly make up their minds to rebuild the whole constitution and revise it in every detail. The national inclination for vast systems would give itself free play in the effort, and nobody will doubt that the same genius which in a few years' time produced the Code Civil, would in a few months produce a tolerable system of constitutional laws. A new Assemblée Constituante with the memories of the errors of the first as a lesson, and the formidable teaching of contemporary European politics to enlighten it, might find in wisdom the same pleasure that the Utopians of 1848 took in generosity. We have every reason to mistrust assemblies, but there are motives at the present

day for thinking that an assembly could not but be influenced by the great wave of practical good sense beating outside it.

Who knows? It is not impossible that such a Constituante might resume the work of the first at the precise point where it diverged from the tradition of France, and instead of a Democracy —improved it is true, but still bearing in itself the elements of instability inherent in democracies —should give us a stronger constitution. It may look like a dream, but the first Napoleon was an impossible dream in 1798, and the second was hardly less of one even in 1848.

Yet, let us not be carried away too far by the logic of events. The only certainty that seems to deserve this name is the certainty of a strengthening of authority. The mode of this strengthening will be determined by circumstances, as its time may be put back by the hope of peace or advanced by international difficulties, but everything points to the disappearance of the legal anarchy known as the Constitution of 1875.

3. *Inevitability of the Democratic Progress.*

Ought we to look further than the immediate probabilities and ask ourselves what the tantalising future may be? Why not? the anticipation of things to come appears frequently to be as illuminating as the lesson of history itself.

Now, if it seems certain that the gradual return of France to her traditional habits of mind, along with the political necessities she has to face, must sooner or later bring her back to a *régime* in which the multitude will no longer be ruler, it seems no less certain that the rise of the lower classes cannot and will not be impeded. The word democracy means two very different things: it means, first of all, the absurdity which places sovereignty in numbers and entrusts the responsibility of the common welfare to those who are the least able to bear it, but it also means the extension of better material conditions and of a higher intellectual and moral culture to those who so far have not had the benefit of them.

Now the history of the nineteenth century in Europe and America leaves no doubt that what interests modern minds the most in the development of nations is this kind of democracy. When we look back upon the history of France or England—in which merely political elements have played less part than in the history of Germany or Italy—we are immediately conscious that, compared with it, all the rest—evolution of parties, succession of governments, &c.—shrinks into insignificance. Such a test cannot deceive us.

It is a fact that the millions, which before the expansion of industrialism and the enormous en-

largement of armies were practically part of the soil, and hardly distinguished from the agricultural map of countries, have acquired, owing to this double organisation, a consciousness of the part they play which makes them completely new factors in the history of nations. To-day, the most obscure workman in an out-of-way factory knows that some of his country's security and some of its productivity rests upon him, and the exercise he is taught to make of the right of association magnifies a hundredfold for him the consciousness he may have of his importance. The political organisation of the various countries in which this element is found has little to say to it. It is the same in England in spite of long traditions, in Belgium in spite of unheard-of prosperity, in Germany in spite of the iron rod, in Japan in spite of recent victory and intoxicating rise, and in the United States itself in spite of the delusive optimism in which its workers live. The governments may be strong or weak, they may object to this movement or endeavour to guide it, the movement is there all the same and will not be ignored.

It is a pity that the theorist of the best-known system of a political Restoration in France, M. Maurras, should have given a purely literary solution to a problem which he could not leave out, but which evidently he disliked considering

in its concrete significance. This may be partly the cause of some of the antipathy which yet subsists in many milieus against the Monarchy, although no essential antagonism can be pointed out between such a form of government and the democratic development.

M. Maurras is not only a Monarchist, but a resolute oligarchist, and the consequence of this last tendency is the return to nothing less than a caste organisation. I have already given the main lines of what is Integral Nationalism, and a brief criticism of its exaggeration will be sufficient here.

M. Maurras and his friends are almost all converted sceptics whose conversion has been brought about by the sight of the decadence of their country, and who have rebuilt their creed upon patriotism. They have seen that the most frequent consequence of a metaphysical culture is the superb indifference of Renan in his early period to patriotic contingencies, and their soul rebels against it. The true basis on which a man ought to seat his life is the sacred soil of his country, and whatever will not agree with patriotism must be regarded as immediately false. Now it appears clearly that Democratism and all the sentimental progress dreamed of since the Revolution are dangerous, because they are the offspring of emotion and imagination instead of reason, and

invariably stand in the way of a nation's greatness. Therefore let them be discarded, and let something more substantial be substituted for them. What this something should be is not difficult to find out. Experience proves that the strongest society which history has known so far is the Catholic Church. Let us then copy its constitution. But some people who—like M. Maurras himself, and in his own words—"feel uncomfortable as long as the notion of a Deity is forced upon them," will object to a civil ideal being derived from a religious society; what can be suggested to them? Here again the answer is easy: the Catholic Church has had a model in the Roman Empire, and whoever meditates on the organisation of the Roman Empire will see that real civic stability lay there because the reason of the best few imposed its will upon the vagaries of the many.

Here M. Maurras appears in perfect agreement with Renan in *La Réforme Intellectuelle de la France;* in the works of both men we see the necessity of a special class to think for the rest and govern them according to reason.

But the question cannot be entirely left out: What is the rôle of the lower classes, and what share in the patriotic development will be given to them? It would be difficult for a modern man, no matter how remote from Christianity, to

be satisfied with the pagan views about the poor, and difficult above all to state them openly. The theorists of Nationalism have cast about for a solution and found one, for which, however, they have to thank M. Barrès more than their own ingenuity. The lower classes are not capable of thought, but they are capable of emotion, and if their children are brought up in the best traditions of the nation, if their artisans are also kept within the tradition of their trade, their emotions will be in the right direction, and may serve as a sentimental reserve in which the intellect of their betters will have its roots. In that way there will be unity and harmony, order and a hierarchy.

I said above that this solution was merely literary. In fact, it only looks well on paper but will not stand a practical investigation, as is the case with most of the theories of the same school. These philosophers detest sentimental dreams, but they enjoy intellectual air-castles. If the whole world were moving towards the ideal they propose, it might be possible, by dint of eloquence and persuasion, to give satisfaction to the working classes with the noble though modest rôle assigned to them. But exceptions would be dangerous, and the germs of rebellion would inevitably come from them even into the best guarded monarchies. Now, far from there being a move towards a

separation of classes and a return to castes, it is too evident that we see the reverse. In spite of the daily effort made by M. Maurras to convince us that, in Germany for instance, the public spirit as well as uncompromising governments never let the Socialist theories interfere with the practical welfare of the country, it is certain that there, as elsewhere, the millions all tend towards an economical independence which will raise them above their present station. This in itself has nothing in common with Socialism or even Democratism. A man is no Socialist because he wants to be better off. Yet in the long run the economic evolution of the lower classes must result in political changes. With independence culture also will come, and with this the consciousness of the new right to have a word to say in one's country's affairs. Underneath the universal straining of the lower classes after better material circumstances lies their longing to be something more than a sentimental reserve.

It is needless to say that if the dogma of Christian fraternity is not, on any account, to be made convertible into the chimera of equality, and cannot therefore be regarded as synonymous with any levelling notion, it is, on the contrary, easily reconcilable with the idea of a moral and intellectual bettering which the classes at present termed higher ought to promote in every possible

way; the two great forces at work in the world, faith and material progress, meet at this point.

As a conclusion, it seems difficult to resist the probability that the rise of the working classes will go on in spite of the dangers caused by some of its revolutionary aspects. And it is possible that some day civilisations may exist on this globe in which the idea of social inequalities will be practically done away with, but which may not have lost the territorial feeling. Such communities might be as hostile to one another as Sparta was to Athens. But this is not an immediate probability. Present symptoms, on the contrary, point to a victory of the class conception over the old territorial idea; and if, as may be expected, the gradual progress of Syndicalism eliminates finance with its greed and militarism with its violence from the dangerous points at which wars have been so far produced, long periods of peace can easily be imagined.

The consequence is plain. If this should be the case, the globe would witness a universal establishment of what in default of another word we may call humanitarian principles, and with their extension the old form of patriotism associated with territories and frontiers would become more and more philosophical, milder and more poetic, until it would appear to have been in its present notion crude and uncivilised.

4. *A Moral Solution to the Political Problem.*

If patriotism, as we at present conceive it, is thus doomed to disappear in the contempt of the wise, is it very necessary that we should trouble ourselves so much about its immediate destinies, and that in order to save a sort of intellectual category we should steel ourselves against our neighbours, look upon their progress as our ruin, and go back to barbarism when everything about us is becoming gentler ?

This is the objection that will often present itself to the modern mind morbidly anxious over its every thought and impulse, everlastingly fearful of wasting any chance of immediate advantage, and trying in everything to see the consequences of all its actions into eternity. Many a good man has been enervated by this kind of philosophy, the first effect of which is to throw all that we think and do out of the human scale by isolating it in the solitude of ages to come.

We have reasons to fear that people open to this kind of reasoning would not reject another line of argument which, however, is a great deal more shocking. If the idea of possible peace between our nation and its neighbours in the far-away future is enough to annihilate the energy of these long-sighted men, the certitude of changes

to take place much sooner ought unfortunately to be enough to produce the same effect. The vision of universal peace is not a discovery of modern philosophers, and since it has been in the dreams of poets, many nations have risen, been transformed, and finally have melted away like snow into the earth. Why should we take such pains over the preservation of accidents without a substance? It is a folly to give much attention to mere geographical outlines or even to racial characteristics which slowly but inevitably wear away. The map of France has been as changing as if it were designed on water. In the last hundred years or so the artificial importance attached by the Romanticists to languages and to racial bonds has seemed to confer more solidity on wide family groupings, but even this is a delusion as much as a novelty. The Middle Ages thought no more of languages than of frontiers, and if there were abuses in those times they certainly were not caused by this indifference to geography. In spite of all that we may do, one millennium or two will make the French language as different from itself as it is at present from Latin, and the inhabitants of the Seine and Loire valleys will be as uncertain of their French descent as we are to-day of our Frankish or Gaul origins. Why not be resigned to that which is not only inevitable in the future,

but is in the making at the very moment we speak ?

It is needless to enter into a controversy on these subjects. Universal peace will be doubtful as long as there are men with wants and passions and a desire to get as much as possible by giving as little as they can, but the mutability of geographical contingencies is a fact and all that is said about it is irrefutable. But something else is irrefutable because it can be deduced from the same premises, that is the vital distinction between the intellectual and the emotional order, and the superiority of the former as a factor of true happiness in man's life.

Political events mean nothing in themselves : commercial agreements after long diplomatic controversies, remodellings of frontiers in an unvisited colony, exchanges of influence, substitutions of protectorates, &c.—all these have no more significance than mere changes of Government, and many a man has led a good and full life without taking any notice of them. But there are times when everybody feels compelled to give his attention to these apparently indifferent affairs. Then the situation changes at once : we have to adopt an attitude, and according to the side we choose we find that our self-esteem rises or decreases. It is the case whenever our freewill and no longer our intellect is the arbi-

trator: we are placed before the alternative of acting like men or feeling like cowards, and the contingencies which have brought about this alternative soon recede into the background and vanish.

So we know nothing about the future except that the ethical life of man in ten thousand years will be subject to the same laws as to-day. The notion of fraternity may have prevailed then in such a manner that civilisations will not only appear more perfect than at present, but may even call forth the best tendencies in every man, yet this is not certain. It may, on the contrary, have degenerated into some sort of Buddhism in which a feminine gentleness would replace more virile virtues, and then where would be the profit?

Whatever may happen when our short lives have long bubbled out, a problem lies before us about which we have to make up our minds at once. Two tendencies offer themselves to us which it was for years difficult to characterise, and which only the clearer-sighted could define satisfactorily to themselves, but which the flash of lightning of 1905 suddenly made perfectly plain. On one side we see the Socialist philosophy which might have been very different from what it is, but which, having gone to Materialism for its metaphysics, has paid the penalty of such

a mistake by being—not in the acts of the workers, but in the speeches of its theorists—low, cynical, and ill-bred—in a word, the philosophy of the belly. On the other side is the simple, patriotic feeling, with no philosophy at its back, but a great moral radiance which would not be there unless it had reason on its side. Patriotism does not bother about metaphysical rights and wrongs, it cares nothing for philosophy, and only cares for that much of history which it carries in itself. It does not take the trouble either to scan scientifically the causes of the situation before which it is placed; it hears a great deal that seems probable enough and disgusting enough about the responsibility of bankers and great money-makers in wars; it even realises that the ambition of a Napoleon or that of a Bismarck are not altogether pure, but at no time is this sufficient to damp its energy, and when, as is the case in France at the present moment, everything tends to simplify the alternative in which it finds itself, nothing obscures its vision. Its choice is between the lazy or cynical forgetfulness of the events which in 1870 detached more than a million Frenchmen from France and forced an unprecedented humiliation upon her, between the not very remote danger of another invasion with its shameful or horrible consequences, and the acceptance of the baptism of

blood which the Tangier demonstration made an immediate possibility in 1905 and the Agadir affair transformed into an all-powerful attraction in 1911. Philosophy, evolution, words of all kinds, fraternity in disguise, the watchwords of parties, the hypocritical ranting of politicians, all this vanishes before the prospect of losing that which Socialism calls vain geographical appearances, but which a man worthy of the name regards as the condition of his most valued life and of his self-esteem. The future will be what it may, but the present is not ambiguous, and if it had been less perspicuous this book could not have been written. After a century of playing with ideas and mistaking words for things, the French have turned their forces towards the fields in which men meet men, actions count for speeches, and courage is the highest philosophy: if the nation could have at present the chiefs —let alone useless representatives—who would really feel as it does, there would be no doubt left that since 1905 an era has been closed and another has dawned which will see a simplification of men's ideas and a strengthening of their feelings.

Indeed, under the patriotic impulse which I have followed in its manifestations, there is more than one reaction. There is not only the weariness of scepticism, the longing after clear prin-

ciples on which to base one's life even at the cost of the long-valued right to exercise free thought in every domain, but there is also another kind of lassitude. I referred at the beginning of this chapter to one great modern characteristic which is an everlasting consciousness of comfort or discomfort—moral as well as physical—in their minutest perceptibility, a careful doling out of our efforts, as if all our soul might go out of us by drops, a perpetual anxiety not to be imposed upon or made to do more than our share which spoils married lives themselves as it embitters the intercourse between classes, in short a general stinginess in the exercise of our faculties and in the use of our existence. Modern men all seem to be neurotic subjects shut up in their houses but fearing visitors, and in default of something worse to tax their nerves resenting the ringing of a bell and the barking of a dog. This, in the long run, results like everything else in a reaction. That exquisite selfishness sooner or later disgusts, because it is not only ashamed of itself, but self-torturing as well. Comparisons are made between this disquietude—in spite of so much self-seeking—and the peace in which men lived when they gave more freely of their own. Hence a yearning after simplicity, and a longing to be detached from one's self which accompanies even the most en-

thusiastic encomium of progress. Hence, no doubt, many of the traits of individual courage which France has witnessed in the past few years. The French have welcomed with gratitude the opportunity which the danger of their country offered to them to know the rare taste of heroism while merely doing their duty. They feel that this great chance of breaking away from egotism may restore them to the simplicity of less sophisticated times and rid them of the sensation of surfeit.

All this is after all an *a posteriori* proof that political problems are ultimately reducible to moral problems, as in fact they become the moment they are presented in the concrete to each individual. Let there be in a nation the disposition to self-sacrifice which alone translates outward occurrences into the terms of ethics, and the fluctuations of its history will matter little: success will not weaken nor defeat depress it.

But the difficulty is to keep up such a disposition after the excitement of a crisis has abated, and through long historical periods. It is here that the possibility of creating an atmosphere, a moral environment from which individuals cannot escape should be considered. Given such an atmosphere, even the weak become strengthened; without it, many naturally strong will waste their energies. But how can we produce

this invigorating *milieu* in which even Socialist institutions, if they should ever be realised, would not be more dangerous for the temperament of mankind than the passage of Europe from feudalism was in the days of the Communist movement? Only one answer seems possible; only one man will always and quite naturally raise all questions to the plane of morals, high above petty interest: this is not the philosopher, it is the believer, or at any rate the philosopher who knows where belief must begin.

Nothing, except faith, will do for a whole existence, above all for the existence of a nation, what roused patriotism only does at intervals. The energy necessary for the building up of an Empire, nay, of such an apparently trivial affair as the building up of a family of more than one child, will not be given to a whole nation without a religious support. It takes the simplicity, the trust, the almost unconscious habit of self-forgetfulness of the Christian to stay on the self-sacrificing level for any length of time. The everlasting study of Frenchmen, therefore, ought to be, in peace as well as in troubled times, the perfection of their race and faith as it appeared in such examples as Saint Louis or Jeanne d'Arc. With this admixture of patriotic pride and Christian humility, of true love and manly dignity, of child-like simplicity and common-sense as clear-

sighted as shrewdness itself, history may be remodelled many times, civilisation may evolve indefinitely, patriotism may assume numberless forms, but the individual will have no difficulty in reading his duty in historical circumstances. On the whole, politics will always be made subservient to morals, and morality is precarious without its eternal support: the lesson of this book is the recommendation of a plain and virile Christianity.

PART IV

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

FRANCE AND THE WAR OF 1914

THE general import of this volume is plain enough: France has been weakened by her disasters in 1870, but the losses she sustained at that time would have been made good easily, had it not been for the intellectual deterioration which a baneful philosophy and a lawless literature produced. The true weakening of France came from ideas obscuring her reason and enervating her moral powers. However, a country noted for lucidity and logic cannot be a prey to paradoxes for a longer period than that during which their brilliance or their daring aspect deceive as to their essential harmfulness. Let any circumstance reveal them in their true character, and in more or less time the fascination they create will be replaced by disgust. The circumstance with men of the intellectual capacity of Taine and Renan, and hundreds of kindred intellects, was the war of 1870 and the Commune of 1871; it completely changed their outlook, and showed to them that in times like our own, during which the thought of the philosopher, tentative as the latter may

think it, is apt to become the guiding rule of the millions, it is imperative for the thinker to watch carefully the effects of his speculation and be modest in its expression. This feeling, along with the development of doctrines less narrowly intellectual than those in favour during the greater part of the nineteenth century, has transformed the tone of French literature, and brought it back to a standpoint very similar to its traditional attitude.

The masses were sure in due time to follow the lead thus given to them, but owing to the slow pace at which ideas travel through passive minds this might have taken long trains of years. The circumstance which awakened the national common-sense, as the literary man's responsibility had been roused beforehand, was the danger of France which appeared after the Tangier affair in 1905 and the Agadir incident in 1911. From that moment the seeds of wisdom and energy, which had lain dormant while the multitudes believed in the millennium of universal peace and universal prosperity, developed with the rapidity of an unhampered natural growth, to the delight of patriots and the disappointment of the enemies of France. It seemed as if, almost suddenly, the body of the French nation were recovering its long lost vigour in the bracing quality of a purer and clearer atmosphere.

Yet, there was an obstacle in the way of this recovery. While the country craved order, morality, and discipline as the conditions of self-preservation, a considerable section of its rulers—in fact the majority in the Senate and a strong minority in the Chamber—did their best to keep up the lawlessness and the general laxity, thanks to which they have been able during almost forty years to make the most of a constitution unworthy of the name for the promotion of their own selfish interests.

History will not forget that in 1913 the Radicals were against M. Poincaré, whom popular feeling regarded as the representative of patriotism against abdication to Germany, and that, in the spring of 1914, on the eve of a war which many signs portended as imminent, they stood for a reduction of the military service from three to two years, a colossal crime unless it was a colossal folly.

Against the obstacle arising from the presence of these men in office, there was the hope that the pressure of opinion would be sufficient to bring about, slowly or forcibly, through persuasion or through a *coup d'état*, a modification of the constitutional laws limiting the powers of the Senate and Chamber, and giving sufficient elbow-room to Government to make its name something better than a mockery and its responsibility a reality rather than a word.

The greatest portion of this volume has been written in view of this situation. Its tone, which some people will think alternately optimistic and the reverse, does not deserve, I will venture to say, such epithets. Optimism is built upon wishes rather than logic, and the hopefulness prevalent through this book is only an aspect of gratification at tangible realities. The charge of pessimism is hardly better founded: there is no pessimism in the certainty that a country destitute of a better guidance than that of an irresponsible assembly is, in spite of many favourable signs, in a dangerous condition. Yet, I must confess that the apparent success of the Radicals since the fall of M. Barthou and the consequent effacement of President Poincaré were not likely to produce hopefulness, and that many a passage of this book was written in incertitude and anxiety.

Now we have to find out for ourselves to what extent the war of 1914 has justified or disproved the main views expounded in the foregoing pages.

Never was there an easier task. Never was light more generously and evenly spread upon the great issues before which, only in July 1914, we still stood in uncertainty. It must remain as the experience of all those who lived in France during the eventful days of the mobilisation and the first weeks of the war that all that had seemed complicated beforehand instantaneously became simpli-

fied, and as all the elemental feelings of the human soul were finding expression, even on sophisticated lips, with the naturalness of the most ancient literatures, political questions suddenly became clear to the minds even of the peasant and the child.

The real epilogue to this book was written in the facts themselves during the last days of July and the first days of August, 1914. One week saw the acquittal of Madame Caillaux and the response to the mobilisation order, and showed beyond a doubt that what is the main certainty running through these five hundred pages, viz., that if France was the victim of politicians her own heart was sound, cannot be shaken now. Four days after the sickening exhibition of sentimental decadence in certain Parisian spheres, and of the loss of honour among a certain section of the French magistracy, while the smell of decay was still in the air, the bells calling the French nation to arms were heard in every town and village, and in one moment M. Caillaux and his party with its ambitions and corruptions vanished from view as if they had never existed, and the country which so far had only been a sort of abstraction perceived through literary phenomena or emotional manifestations, became one great body every motion of which was as perceptible as a familiar gesture.

And what were the characteristics of this true France rid at last of her political excrescences? Exactly those which hundreds of us had devotedly hoped would be revealed when the crisis came and the symptoms of which we had watched through years of patient attention. The patriotism of the French was as pure as it had been during the Hundred Years' War or the great Revolutionary campaigns, and it was more universal. Every man did his duty and every woman encouraged him to do it with a simplicity which did not suppress joy but subdued enthusiasm; there was no hatred, if there was a degree of indignation, in its manifestations: the self-analysis inevitable with the French even when they are over-excited showed clearly that the war of 1914 was not an occasion of revenge and redress, as it might have been, for the wrongs suffered in 1870, but exclusively the contest of civilisation with overbearing barbarism; England was regarded in this struggle as the historical representative of justice and kindliness, and the declaration of the Czar announcing the resurrection of Poland, which a few months before would have had the appearance of a passage from an impossible epic, seemed a matter of course. The whole background of the war was intellectual and moral.

With such an environment it was impossible

that the courage of the soldiers and even of the non-combatants should be much affected by the vicissitudes of the warfare. The present writer saw the French army retreating from Belgium after the battle of Charleroi, and he saw Paris on the eve of the probable siege in the last days of August: exhausted and battered as the soldiers were by four days' continuous fighting they were smiling and reassuring, and with the German aeroplanes over them, the Parisians, women as well as men, showed extraordinary coolness.

Another feature of those early weeks of the war was the evident satisfaction which the people took in feeling themselves for the first time, for many years, really governed. The Chamber and Senate had disappeared; the Cabinet had become so intimately united with the military authorities that the War Office seemed to be the only seat of government; meanwhile the communications of the Ministers as well as those of the Generals became so laconic that it required all the self-discipline latent in the national spirit to be satisfied with them, yet there was no sign of impatience, no expression of scepticism, and a questioning attitude on the part of M. Clemenceau was reproved as an attempt at dictatorialness.

So in these weeks during which all her vital qualities were one after the other tested, France proved that far from being in decadence, as super-

ficial observers had imagined her, she was capable of self-possession resting on the clearest understanding of a situation, of enduring courage, of a slowly gathered capacity for discipline, in short, of all the manly virtues which, since her awakening from dreams and theories, have made her a nation again instead of the home of millions of individuals, each one apparently engaged in the pursuit of his own ideal or pleasure. In this much, then, the war has demonstrated that the transformation described in this volume is a reality.

The consequences in the near future are obvious. Even supposing that which at present seems unthinkable, that is to say, an ultimate success of Prussia resulting as in 1870 in a territorial diminution and a loss of political influence for France, the national spirit which I have described, helped by a strong Government, would even under such unfavourable conditions make France a formidable danger for her enemies. In fact, the danger which Bismarck dreaded for years, and which he only ceased to fear when he saw the constitution of 1875 firmly established and productive of its worst effects, would become everlasting, and the combination of such a power with European opinion and the resolve of England and Russia would be sure in due time to restore to France the possessions she might have lost.

If, as is more probable, the European equilibrium regain its stability, it appears impossible that France should make an unwise use of her renewed influence. There is no trace of imperialism or militarism in her attitude, her patriotism is free from all taint of overweening pride, her wish for expansion is conditioned by that of her neighbours and will never become an overruling impulse: the days of Napoleon the First with his greed for conquest are as forgotten as those of Napoleon the Third with his taste for idle speculation.

But whether immediate success or transient failure must be the conclusion of the gigantic struggle which France with her Allies entered in August 1914, it remains all important that the obstacle which throughout this volume has been pointed out as being in the way of her restoration—I mean the danger arising from a bad Government or a bad constitution, should be permanently removed. I have repeated several times in the third part of this volume that the sentimental or emotional impulse of a nation, however irresistible it may appear in its first effects, is essentially ephemeral. In spite of her transformation, if France should happen to be led once more, after the peace is settled, by Governments intimately connected with a party looking for its success in disorder, lack of continuity, and ultimately such inferior tendencies as envy, greed, abhorrence of

effort and corresponding indulgence, what had been gained by years of slow reclamation would promptly be forfeited once more. Peace has always been a more difficult trial for the French than war, and Radicalism is a more dangerous enemy for their national qualities than German militarism.

So the real conclusion of this book must be that what France needs is not a conversion of her mind and soul which is at present an indisputable fact, but a transformation of her regulating system. This volume has been written for English readers with a desire underlying every page that England may see clearly where are the true interests of France, because they are her own interests and after all the interests of mankind as well. Each nation must stand for an ideal for which it is particularly fitted. The ideal of England is to feel kindly and to govern justly; the ideal of France is to think rightly and to express her thoughts with the brilliance which seems her special gift. But this cannot be done, at any rate cannot be done with the spontaneousness characteristic of happy periods, under political conditions making deception and intrigue a necessity. France cannot be representative of intellectual truth and of the order which invariably attends truth with a constitution amounting to anarchy.

The hope and prayer of the present writer, therefore, is that England may see the necessity for

France of stronger institutions. This is a favourable time indeed for a remodelling which even before the war seemed the only way open to the universal craving after stability. Wars have always been followed by efforts at improvement which the light thrown upon every object by the presence of danger renders easy and even instinctive. All that is needed is that what we saw in the days immediately preceding the war, that is, a Parliament content with its *rôle* and a Government equal to its responsibilities, should become the rule and no longer be the rare exception. England is not expected to assume a part which her national temperament abhors and which nobody can imagine her assuming; there is no question of an impossible interference in the affairs of France; but it is all-important that the sane opinions concerning the relations of the legislative and the executive powers now prevalent in the French press should be known, examined, and appreciated in England. It is not amiss that the passionate attention with which Bismarck, towards 1875, followed the framing by the Assemblée Nationale of constitutional laws which he knew would work for him better than ten armies, should be the attitude of the friends of France at a time when the same laws appear at last in their true light and when the least effort may replace them by reasonable institutions. The interest in social improvements natural to every

healthy mind is no interference, and it is often the condition of progress.

I demand nothing more from the readers of this book. If our common wish be fulfilled, if with better institutions France be given the leaders she deserves, the beginning of the twentieth century will soon appear as one of the great turning-points in her history. With a distinct consciousness of the difference between real progress and mere dreams, between liberty and demagogism, the era opened a hundred and fifty years ago by the Encyclopædists will be closed, and another opened. What this new era may be it is futile to predict, but of one thing at least we can be certain, viz., that the propagandism natural to the French nation will be more active than ever, and that its expression, philosophic, political, or literary, will be immeasurably superior to what it has been since the end of the classical ages.

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